GAME OF THE MONTH: Zork Nemesis

NEW!

PC GAMES

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COMPUTER GAMING

GUIDED TOUR!

Diablo

The makers of Warcraft II re-invent the RPG

56 NEW GAMES

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An IDG Communications Publication

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20 Game Reviews

Star Trek: Klingon, Deep Space Nine, Descent II, Cyberia 2, EarthSiege 2, and Civilization II

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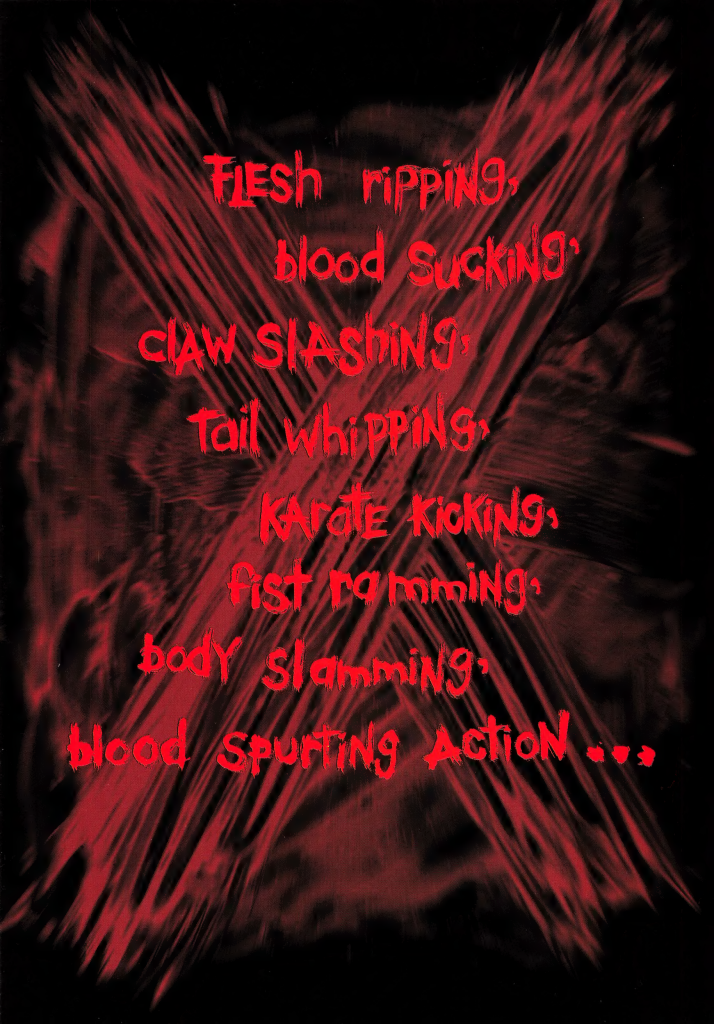
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BLOOD SUCKING,
CLAW SLASHING,
TAIL WHIPPING,
KARATE KICKING,
FIST RAMMING,
BODY SLAMMING,
BLOOD SPURTING ACTION...

"...revolutionary game design, it may indeed knock fighting fans into another universe of apocalyptic action."
— Strategy Plus
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The best fighters from around the universe battle
By far, the largest, most detailed foes ever seen in a fighting game on the PC. Exotic charcters up to 3/4 of the screen's height. Far better than **Mortal Kombat**, **Street Fighter**, **One Must Fall**, **Ressurection**, and every other fighting game.
Each win allows you to advance to the next round.
Customize your matches with several different options, including fighter quickness, auto-blocking off/on, special moves toggle, and a dozen more.
Innovative screen panni
real-time scaling, shadows
like those only seen in
Lose and your homeworl
Spine tingling music by Bobby Prince, (famous for **Duke Nukem 3D** and **DOOM**) with heart stopping sound and voice effects.
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the Ultimate Tournament
If you are looking for something new and innovative in fighting games, you found it. Special never-before-seen moves, concussion causing combos, resurrections, & humiliations.
ng, zooming, and special FX, the arcade.
Rip your friends apart with 2-player head-to-head action at the same computer. Even though one player games are awesome, nothing is more fun than pounding on a friend.
is destroyed. Survival is your only option!
Eight blood thirsty characters, two bone crushing champions and a nasty surprise that you will never be able to forget.
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"...revolutionary game design, it may indeed knock fighting fans into another universe of apocalyptic action."
— Strategy Plus

The best fighters from all around the universe battle in the ultimate tournament.

By far, the largest, most detailed foes ever seen in a fighting game on the PC. Exotic characters up to 3/4 of the screen's height. Far better than **Mortal Kombat**, **Street Fighter**, **One Must Fall**, **Ressurection**, and every other fighting game.

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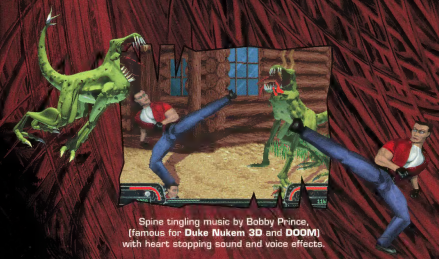
Rip your friends apart with 2-player head-to-head action at the same computer. Even though one player games are awesome, nothing is more fun than pounding on a friend.

Lose and your homeworld is destroyed. Survival is your only option!



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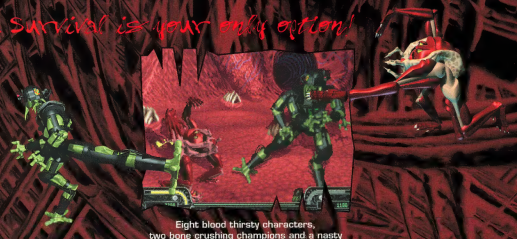

Eight blood thirsty characters, two bone crushing champions and a nasty surprise that you will never be able to forget.

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thumb sucking mama's boy game. Nuh-uh.

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Somebody's going to get hurt

and it ain't gonna be me.

I've got you in my sights

and you look like a sucker.

A puny little Cybrid sucker.

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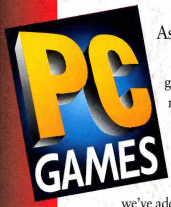
Welcome to *PC Games*



As you may have noticed, *PC Entertainment* has become *PC Games*.

What does that mean for you? Well, it means more of the great game reviews, gaming features, and game news you expected from *PC Entertainment*, plus even more focused game coverage.

We're devoting the entire book to our true passion: computer games. All our news coverage will now concern games, and we'll use extra space in our game reviews section to tell you more about the big ones. Knowing that you don't just want help deciding which games to buy, but also with how to do better at those you own, we've added a Strategy & Tactics section (beginning on page 94). This month, you'll find hints for Wing Commander IV and Ripper, plus cheats for TekWar, Road Warrior, and more.

And because we know that your computer is a key part of your gaming experience, we've expanded our popular Tech Shop section. You'll find reviews of the latest hardware, understandable explanations of key technologies, comparisons of competitive products, and helpful answers to your gaming technology questions.

To make this information more accessible, we've also changed the look of the magazine, with bigger, bolder graphics designed to reflect the excitement of the games we cover.

But the changes don't just apply to the print product. We're also giving the *PC Games* CD-ROM a renewed focus on game demos for PC users, plus making other improvements over the next few months. The disc comes bundled with newsstand copies, and subscribers can order it, too. (If you're a subscriber who's not getting the disc, it's time to upgrade your subscription. Check the box below to learn how.) And our Web site (**http://www.pcgamesmag.com**) is focusing exclusively on games, too.

Even better, all three elements are now integrated much more closely than before. On page 10, for example, you'll find a listing of the great demos found on our disc, instructions on how to use it, and a spotlight on Terra Nova, our June Demo of the Month. Similarly, turn to page 12 for a preview of our Web site, complete with highlights of our up-to-the-minute game coverage, cool links, and game review archive.

But that's not all. Throughout the magazine you'll find a couple of key symbols. The gold disc indicates that you'll find a related demo on our CD-ROM, while the globe symbol means that you can find more information on our Web site.

We're sure you'll like what you find. But we also want to hear what you have to say. So we've added a Talk Back page (page 112). It's your chance to help us come up with a new name for our CD-ROM, and tell us what you think of our new look and new focus. And you could win a free game and a free subscription to *PC Games* just for trying.

Gini Talmadge
President/Publisher

Fredric Paul
Editor in Chief

To upgrade your subscription to include the monthly *PC Games* CD-ROM, packed with demos of the latest and greatest games, call 800-688-4575.

JUNE 1996

PC GAMES

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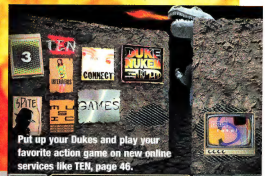

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Run locally; kill globally. As new network-based gaming services gear up, you can play Duke, Doom, and other action hits against real players across the country. You'll never have to kill a dumb monster again!

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PC GAMES™ VOLUME 3, NUMBER 6

PC Games (ISSN 1074-1356), The Complete Guide to Computer Gaming, is published monthly for $18.00 per year by Infotainment World, Inc., 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Ste. 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; (415) 349-4300. An IDG Company: The World's Leader in Information Services On Information Technology. The PC Games® name and logo are registered trademarks of Infotainment World, Inc. Second-class postage paid at San Mateo, CA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PC GAMES, P.O. Box 58710, Boulder, CO 80322. Change of Address: Please send old label and new address to PC GAMES, P.O. Box 58710, Boulder, CO 80322. SUBSCRIPTIONS: (303) 604-7445 or (800) 706-5505. For subscription orders, please write to the above address. Please allow 6–8 weeks for delivery of your first issue. Foreign and Canadian orders must be prepaid in U.S. dollars on a U.S. bank and must include $30/year additional for shipping (air delivery). No part of this publication may be printed or reproduced without written permission from the publisher. *PC Games* makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of articles published in the magazine and assumes no responsibility for damages as a result of errors or omissions. PRODUCED IN U.S.A.

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PLAY *the Demo on the disc*

SEE *MORE* **Online**
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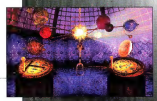

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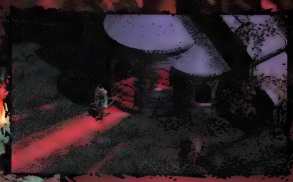
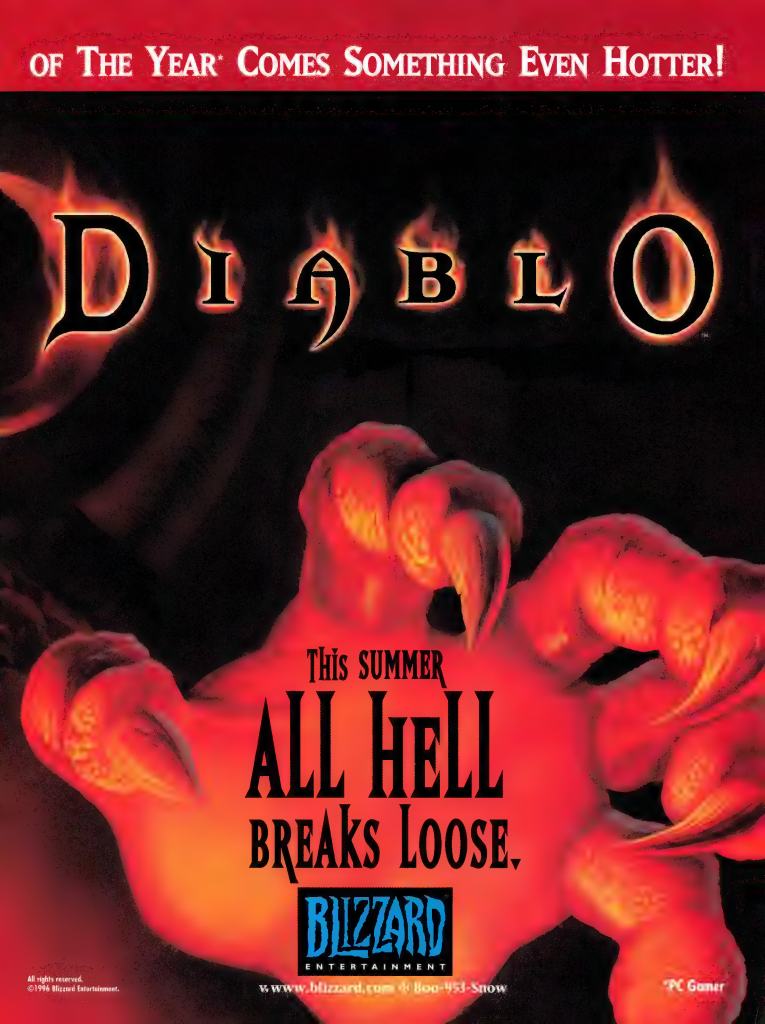
From the Makers of WarCraft II 1995's Game



- Join forces with other adventurers through multiplayer support
- Play directly over Internet
- An ever changing gothic world brought to life in SVGA
- Exclusively for WIN 95

Vengeance, power, intellect and magic, these are the tools you will need to battle the Lord of Evil, Diablo. Embark if you dare upon a dark and sinister quest that will pull you into the very depths of hell itself...and beyond.

OF THE YEAR* COMES SOMETHING EVEN HOTTER!



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Editor's Page

Fredric Paul

Turn, Turn, Turn

Everything old is new again." That's true a lot in life, and it's especially true for the product you hold in your hands.

A little less than three years ago, I joined the staff of a small magazine called *PC Games*. Our goal was to change the magazine into something new: a multiplatform games and multimedia magazine called *Electronic Entertainment*.

E^2, as it was called, was a much bigger, splashier book that looked forward to a brave new world of 500-channel interactive TV, set-top boxes in every home, and a thriving multimedia entertainment industry.

But we never lost sight of our primary mission—covering computer games. PC games always remained our first love. And that's why we couldn't be happier about how things have turned out: The PC has won out over the set-top boxes and game consoles, the Internet has supplanted interactive TV as the buzzword of the moment, and games continue to be the dominant form of computer entertainment.

We know that PC games are what you're interested in, and it's what we're interested in, too. That's why this issue marks the return of the *PC Games* name. Sometimes you just can't improve on the original. (Sharp-eyed readers may have noticed our transitional moniker, *PC Entertainment*, on the last five issues.) Our new/old name makes it perfectly clear—once and for all—what we're about.

By reclaiming our original name and purpose, we're also revitalizing our coverage. As we return to our roots, you'll see a new look, a new energy, and a new enthusiasm in our pages. And there'll be nothing but games, games, games. We'll be devoting all our attention to bringing you the best and most comprehensive game coverage possible. We'll have the most reviews of new games, the most insightful game news, the most helpful tips and strategies, and the most important gaming hardware stories.

What won't change is our commitment to giving experts all the information they demand, while also welcoming newcomers into the fold. Nor will we waver in our commitment to great writing and the highest professional standards.

We're excited about the changes, and we hope you are, too.

FP

How We Rate

PC Games uses a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone who's gone to school knows what our grades mean: without resorting to an in-depth explanation or clever chart, an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in five key areas.

Game Play: How good are the game's interface and control scheme, and how much fun it is to play?

Getting Started: How much reading, studying and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)

Graphics: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?

Sound Check: How good are the game's sound effects and musical score, and how well do they fit the game?

Overall Grade: Taking everything into account, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

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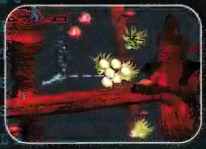
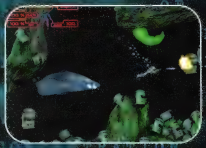
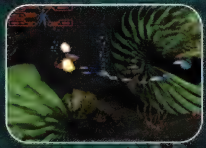
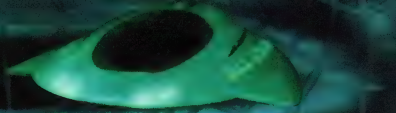






1st Place 1995 *"International Aquatic Film Festival"*
-Cannes, France

"It's efforts like these that will establish a new 32 bit gaming paradigm."
-Next Generation



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AMERICAN SOFTWORKS
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PC/CD-ROM INTERACTIVE
KIDS TO ADULTS
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PC GAMES On Disc

Demo of the Month

Only you can lead Strike Force Centauri through these deadly missions.

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

Looking Glass Technologies, DOS

With 17 great demos on the June disc, it was tough selecting our inaugural Demo of the Month. But with contenders like Descent II, Duke Nukem 3D, Terra Nova, and Warcraft II, we knew we couldn't go wrong.

We picked Looking Glass' Terra Nova for a couple of reasons. First, it's a great game. We just love jumping around a landscape mixing fast-paced, first-person shooting action, a great story, and the strategic challenge of controlling a squad and juggling mission objectives.

But Terra Nova is Demo of the Month because it's also a great demo. Instead of offering a subset of the commercial version of the game, this 38MB DOS-based demo includes three increasingly difficult brand-new missions on planet New Hope. To survive these day and night scenarios, you'll need to keep moving, use all four weapons (the laser, multipulsar, grenades, and smoke bombs), and involve your squadmates. (Hint: Blow up the Alert Lights in Mission 2 for cool lighting effects.)

The Terra Nova demo makes a terrific introduction to a hot game, and offers extra fun for those who already have the commercial version. Give it a try.

What's on the Disc?

Demo of the Month
Terra Nova (Looking Glass Technologies, DOS)

Action Games
Descent II (Interplay, Win 95)
Descent Lunar Based (MacPlay, Mac)
Duke Nukem 3D (Apogee/FormGen, DOS)
Johnny Bazookatone (U.S. Gold, DOS)
Rise 2 (Acclaim/Mirage Technologies, DOS)
Thexder (Sierra, Win 95)

Action/Adventure Games
S.T.O.R.M. (American Softworks, DOS)

Adventure Games
I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream (Cyberdreams, Win)
Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure (Sir-Tech Software, DOS)
Orion Burger (Sanctuary Woods, DOS)

Brain Drain Games
The Real Deal (Mindscape, Win 95)

Fly & Drive Games
Virtual Karts (MicroProse, Win)
Whiplash (Interplay, Win)

Simulation Games
Savage (Discovery, Win/Win 95/Mac)

Strategy Games
Chaos Overlords (New World Computing, Win 95)
Warcraft II (Blizzard Entertainment, Win 95)

Special Alert!

- To Install **Duke Nukem 3D**:
  1. Create an empty DUKE directory.
  2. Copy the contents of D:\dunuk3d\duke3d (where D: is your CD-ROM drive) to the DUKE directory .
  3. Type "setup" from the DUKE directory.
- The **I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream** demo does not work. See the August issue.
- The **Warcraft II** directory is spelled "Blizard".

Getting Around

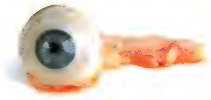
Click on the *PC Games* icon to load the CD-ROM. The Welcome screen lists each game demo and what platform it runs on. Click on the disclaimer button to read all the legal mumbo jumbo.

Click anywhere else on the Welcome screen to bring up the Main screen. You can explore any of the 17 Hot Demos by clicking on the picture of the game you want to try, or click the yellow arrows on the left and right sides of the demo screen to scroll through your choices.

Each game icon brings up a description of the game and a list of the minimum system requirements. On some demos (mostly in Windows and Windows 95), you can simply click the Play button to begin playing the game. On others, click the Install button to put the game on your hard drive. In some cases, you'll have to go to DOS to complete the installation.

You can also navigate through the demos using the buttons on the gray task bar on the left side of the screen. The task bar offers access to the other parts of the disc as well, including a special subscription offer; Express Yourself, a comments area; America Online; and the Buyer's Hotline, a listing of toll-free numbers for getting more information about your favorite games.

Admittedly, without SimulEyes™ VR, PC gaming only requires half the equipment.



Is it you, or is your gaming missing something? If you're not playing with a pair of SimulEyes VR stereo-vision 3D glasses, you're missing plenty. Like true stereoscopic depth perception, stunning realism and, of course, that wicked adrenaline buzz you play for in the first place.

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It's an interactive world, and *PC Games* is right there online to bring you everything you want to know about games: what's new; what's hot; where to find the best cheats, hints, and tips; and how to get the best shareware downloads! You'll never have to go anywhere else for gaming information. Just point your browser to **http://www.pcgamesmag.com** for the most up-to-date info, including:

- News on upcoming game releases
- Tips, cheats, and strategy hints from the *PC Games* staff
- Links to the best gaming resources on the Internet
- The most complete set of game reviews online

And much more!

Highlights of the Month

E3 Show Daily Coverage

The entire *PC Games* staff will be blanketing the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles. Our parent company, Infotainment World, is co-sponsoring the show, and *PC Games* will bring you the show's hottest news the second we get it! Look for the scoop on the hottest games for the Christmas season, developer tips, celebrity interviews, and lots more.

Diablo: The Expanded Guided Tour

Blizzard's Warcraft II redefined real-time strategy games, and its new Diablo promises to do the same for RPGs. If our Guided Tour on page 54 whets your interest for a more in-depth trip to Hell, check out the expanded Tour on the Web. The online edition of *PC Games'* Guided Tour includes more pictures, more descriptions, and more game info. It's more Diablo doings than you'll find anywhere else.

Gowron Speaks: The Uncut Star Talk

Robert O'Reilly has played Gowron, leader of the Klingon High Council, in *Star Trek: The Next Generation, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and now in Simon & Schuster's unique new game/holodeck simulation Star Trek: Klingon. If you want to see the rest of our exclusive interview with the classically trained actor and budding cyberstar, tune into our expanded Star Talk online.

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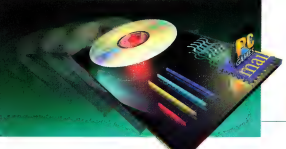

Letters

Question of the Month: Sex and Violence?

Computer games have always had a penchant for bombs and bullets, but more and more of them are throwing sex into the mix. *PC Games* wants to know: Do you think sex and violence have a place in computer games? Let us know how you feel by writing to us at Letters to the Editor, *PC Games*, 951 Mariners Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; faxing us at 415-349-7482, or e-mailing us at pcgamesletters@iftw.com.

Not Psychic

I recently purchased my first copy of *PC Entertainment* with the CD-ROM included. I looked through your magazine and couldn't find any information describing the demos on the CD or instructions on how to install or run them. I also found the CD's directories a bit haphazard, with no obvious disc setup routine for running each of the programs. So what's the deal? Did I miss something somewhere?

D. Fontaine
drf@citynet.net

We hear you. Look on page 10 for information on how to install and use the monthly PC Games *CD-ROM.* —*Ed.*

Great Adventures

I've said it before and I'll say it again—great job on the magazine. Your reviews help me a lot with buying new games. I finished Myst and Buried in Time about a month ago and am in the market for a new adventure game. I've been checking out The Riddle of Master Lu and Bad Mojo, but I can't decide what to buy. Which do you recommend? And could you suggest other adventure games for a very experienced adventurer?

Lee Wasser
Little Silver, NJ

Tough choice! Bad Mojo and The Riddle of Master Lu are both excellent games. Since you tout your experience, we recommend Master Lu, as it is significantly more challenging. If you can, though, get 'em both—you won't be disappointed. You should also check out Zork Nemesis, which just became available (see review, page 64). —*Ed.*

Is It Bad?

I've recently been arguing with my dad about whether or not it hurts to leave a CD-ROM in the PC overnight when the machine's turned off. Could you please settle the problem for us? Also, why don't I get the *PC Games* demo discs with the magazine when it says in the contents page that I should have received one?

Jim Grafmeyer
North Royalton, OH

Don't worry about leaving a CD-ROM in the drive with the computer off; it won't hurt anything. And if you want to upgrade your subscription to include the CD-ROM, call 800-688-4575. —*Ed.*

Ratings

Your magazine is great, but I don't like your Leader Board ratings for Mac games. In your March issue, you put Doom II in second place. And I think that Marathon 2: Durandal should be in first place. Myst is an old game and even us Mac users get tired of Doom.

Guy Williams
Guy_Williams@sfbayguardian.com

Leader Board (see page 26) is a list of best-selling games compiled by research firm PC Data, not our own opinions. This month, however, we add a selection of games—not necessarily best sellers—recommended by the editors of PC Games. —*Ed.*

Bye-Bye DOS

Last year I purchased a new Pentium that was one of the first to include Windows 95. As a Windows 3.1 user for years, I was completely blown away by Windows 95. It's so easy to use, and best of all, the games it runs are very easy to install. Of the 30 or so games I own, The Hive and The 11th Hour have given me the least hassle. My question to you is, Should I abandon DOS games for apparently hassle-free Windows 95 titles?

Ronald Jordan
pacotoo@ix.netcom.com

Let the games decide. Some great new games, such as Terra Nova, are still DOS-only, so if you abandon DOS titles altogether, you'll miss out on some fun. However, if you really want to go with Win 95 and are patient, you'll discover that most new DOS games will be followed by Win 95 versions, the way New World Computing's Heroes of Might & Magic was. —*Ed.*

MicroDoom?

In "Judgment Day for Windows 95" (*PC Entertainment*, January 1996, page 49) you show a picture of a Bill Gates kind of Doom. Is this a patch I can get, or did you just alter the photo?

Michael Dillon
mdillon@ix.netcom.com

Actually, the folks at Microsoft thought it would be fun to make Bill the Doom guy, so they superimposed video of him over the game environment and showed the results at the party inaugurating Windows 95 as a game platform. They seem kind of embarrassed about it now. —*Ed.*

Whoops

On our May 1996 CD-ROM we mislabeled a screenshot for Renegade: Return to Jacob's Star; it should have been identified as Cyberia2. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL WILEY

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You must have total concentration. You must become one with your machine. Because if you don't you will become one with your machine.

STATE OF PAIN
COLLISION

COMING SUMMER 1996

FROM POWERHOUSE ENTERTAINMENT

ANDERSON,

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Wanna go head to head with other military geniuses? All you need is a TCP/IP connection. And guts.

So look alive soldier; D-Day happens this July. Which means you don't have much time to kill.

Mac™ vs. Windows® 95: Which side you gonna take?

Microsoft

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GAME NEWS

Cold Blooded's Finn is half-man, half-shark, and all comic-book attitude.

scouting REPORT

More Warcraft

Blizzard Entertainment has announced an add-on disc for Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness. **Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal** brings the top-selling game (more than 500,000 sold) new Orc and Human campaigns, 24 new missions, and 50 new custom maps, including Orcish swamplands. You also get new cinematics. The expansion disc, which should be on store shelves now, does require a full version of the game. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $30)

More Jack You Don't Know

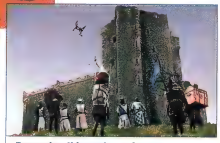
Berkeley Systems is readying a **Question Pack** for its hit trivia quiz game **You Don't Know Jack** (winner of our 1995 Editors' Choice Award for Best Brain Drain Game). For $20, the new pack will add more than 400 new questions to the 800 in the original game. If you don't already have the original, pick up **You Don't Know Jack X-tra Large**, with all 1,200 questions, for $40. (Berkeley Systems; 800-344-5541; Win/Mac CD)

Hoops On Hold

GTE Interactive's widely advertised **NCAA Championship Basketball** has been benched for awhile. It's now due in October, in time for the next college season. According to sources, the problem was in the artificial intelligence intended to let players develop skills and experience over their four years in school.

7th Level Grows Up

Dominion will bring giant 'bots to real-time strategy games.



Remember this mad cow from Monty Python's *Grail* movie?

Perhaps reacting to the lukewarm response to its kiddie-style animated games (such as Battle Beast and Arcade America), 7th Level's next batch of titles will feature more sophisticated 3-D graphics designed to appeal to older players.

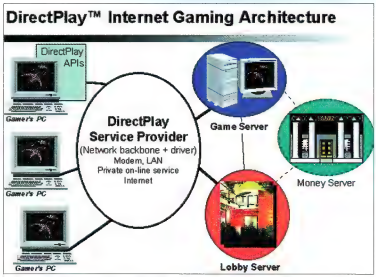
Topping the list are **G-NOME** and **Dominion**, a pair of very different mech games. G-NOME, picked up from Distant Thunder when the 3-D developer was acquired by 7th Level last year, is a direct challenge to MechWarrior 2. According to Todd Porter, 7th Level's vice president of 3-D games, "It makes more sense to re-engineer hits." G-NOME's concept may not be new, but innovations in the Win 95 game include the ability to jump out of your 'bot and into another one and special portals that will introduce new 'bots into the field. Look for G-NOME this fall.

Dominion, meanwhile, puts the 'bots into a Command & Conquer–style real-time strategy game in which your goal is to colonize the Phygos star system. This Win 95 game will boast improved artificial intelligence and more strategy considerations, like mining four different substances and managing ammo, fuel, health, and experience factors. Dominion will ship this summer with four races (Humans, Scorps, Darkens, and Mercenaries), each equipped with 16 different vehicles, and the company plans to post new races on the Internet.

If you liked *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, you'll get your chance to play it in **Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail**. Practically the entire film is mixed into this twisted strategy/puzzle game, spiced with clever little arcade games such as Knights in Kombat, Catch the Cow, and Spank the Virgin. Win the games and solve the puzzles and you'll be treated to the King Brian the Wild scene cut from the original movie. The game, due in June, was co-produced by Pythoner Eric Idle and includes new voice bits by several members of the original gang.

7th Level isn't abandoning its animated roots altogether. In addition to kids' games based on *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, check out **Cold Blooded**, formerly known as Shark Boy. This upcoming game uses comic book–style animation mixed with rail shooting and top-down action. As Finn, a mutant half-man, half-shark, you'll try to save the universe from a battle between two gods. Amid a crunch-metal soundtrack and broad humor, players can concentrate on solving puzzles or blasting bad guys. Either way, there's time to rescue a blonde in a tight blue dress. This Windows game is due in August. (7th Level; 800-884-8863) —*Fredric Paul*

Direct From Microsoft



Microsoft hopes that extending DirectPlay to the Internet will make it easier for developers to create online games.

Bill Gates may not seem like a fun guy, but he wants to rule the world of PC games every bit as much as the desktop and Internet markets.

Not surprisingly, Windows 95 is the key to these plans. Microsoft's DirectX set of technologies is designed to make Win 95 the pre-eminent games platform. This spring, Bill's boys moved DirectX forward in two key areas: 3-D graphics and the Internet.

Hoping to standardize the chaotic rush toward 3-D gaming, Microsoft has finally released a beta software developers kit (SDK) for its Direct3D specification.

Developed by Britain's Render-Morphics, which Microsoft acquired last year, Direct3D is considered a milestone in bringing first-rate 3-D graphics to the PC. The specification is designed to provide a single connection for both 3-D-accelerator-card makers and game developers.

That's critical, because the market has struggled as game makers strain to write separate drivers for each 3-D card they want to support. The fact that many 3-D hardware companies have had to pay developers to create 3-D versions of hot games hasn't been very encouraging, either.

Initial reaction to the new Direct3D beta from game and hardware vendors has been mixed, mainly because the many changes from previous versions raise concerns that the standard still isn't stable.

But despite these nagging questions and a series of unanticipated delays, in the long run most chip makers, board vendors, and game developers have little choice but to support Direct3D. Once the standard is finalized this summer, 3-D products that don't support it may quickly find themselves left behind.

That may eventually be true on all platforms, not just Windows 95. Microsoft says it plans to extend the entire DirectX set of technologies to Windows NT and the Macintosh by the end of the year.

Of course, Direct3D is only a baseline standard. While everything will have to support Direct3D, you can also expect each 3-D card maker to add its own proprietary extensions to maximize performance. Game makers will still have to support these extensions individually.

And Direct3D won't have the market all to itself. Apple Computer hopes its QuickDraw 3D RAVE—Rendering Acceleration Virtual Engine—will offer competition for the Microsoft standard on the Macintosh, Windows 95, and Windows NT.

Easier Net Gaming

Microsoft also wants to make it easier to play your favorite games over the Internet—as long as they're Windows 95 games, of course. So the company is extending its DirectPlay multiplayer technology to the Net.

The DirectPlay Internet Gaming Architecture is designed to speed creation of online games by establishing a common set of features and application programming interfaces (APIs). As with Direct3D, the idea is that game developers won't have to worry about supporting the Internet directly; they can just support DirectPlay. For Internet gaming service providers, DirectPlay will create standards for working with games, building virtual lobbies where players can set up games, and, eventually, billing services to pay for it all.

What does it mean for game players? Microsoft says the new technology will accelerate development of online multiplayer games (for more on that, see "Games Get Connected," page 46). And since DirectPlay also works on local networks, it should be possible to play games over a combination of LAN and Internet connections at the same time. A hands-on test of MechWarrior 2 running over the Net—accessed via the Microsoft Network—indicates playable, if not outstanding, performance and fairly simple setup procedures.

The complete DirectPlay Internet Gaming Architecture is scheduled to be finished by the end of the year. Microsoft says the first games to take advantage of it should appear in time for the holidays.

—Fredric Paul

scouting REPORT

Roll the CyberDice

What do you get when you mix board games and LPs? **CyberDice**, the new venture of Norman Beil, a veteran of Geffen Records/Pictures, and Brian Hersch, a successful board-game creator. The new startup hopes to be "the first interactive game company to fully exploit the creative and marketing potential of brand-name talent."

Game Modem

In another sign of the coming of online games, **Hayes Total Gaming Solutions** is bundling a Hayes Accura 28.8 V.34 DSVD fax modem with voice capabilities with a copy of Papyrus' NASCAR Racing. The unique combo costs $259 and includes Quarterdeck's InternetSuite 2 and WebTalk for full Net access. This package should have everything you need to start "voice gaming" over the Net, where you can thrash your buddy and crow about it at the same time. (Hayes Microcomputer Products; 770-840-9200)

The Stone Plays Air Guitar

Rolling Stone and Virtual Music Entertainment (VME) want to give you a chance to wail into rock heaven with a series of five games based on VME's **Virtual Pick**. The first collaboration, **Great Live Performances**, lets you jam along with clips from some of rock's most famous bands; expect The Who, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix to be among the possible choices. Like VME's first title, Quest For Fame (featuring Aerosmith), the objective is to strum the V Pick—which plugs into the PC's serial port and can be used on a tennis racket or other likely implement—in rhythm with the video. Look for the first releases in time for Christmas. (Virtual Music Entertainment; 508-688-8800)

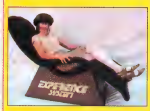
Smell the Game

The next big thing in location-based virtual reality just might

continued on page 20

scouting REPORT

stink. Believe it or not, Phoenix-based Ferris Productions is releasing new VR hardware called **The Experience System**, which adds smell to standard 3-D audio and graphics. The device supports up to seven different scents per game, created by converting liquid into a gas released from the headset near the user's nose. In **V-topia**, the adventure that comes bundled with the system, you can fly through a forest of evergreens while inhaling a fresh pine scent. The Experience System debuted at The Cybersmith in Cambridge, Mass. Look for it and other sensory games at arcades and VR centers near you.



Olympic Games

If you go to the Olympics in Atlanta this summer, you won't have to spend all your time watching; you'll get the chance to play, too. The Coca-Cola Olympic City is set to offer a series of unique interactive sports games developed by the SportsLab. Visitors will be able to race Jackie Joyner-Kersee in a 10-meter dash, shoot H-O-O-P-S with Grant Hill, challenge gymnast Shannon Miller on the balance beam, pitch and hit against Olympic baseball stars, tackle a mountain biking course and Paralympic wheelchair race, score an Olympic event with real judges, and participate in a virtual medals ceremony.

Genius TV

RCA is working on integrating PC applications into a 35-inch TV set. Due in 1988, the **Genius TV** will feature Internet access, a

continued on page 22

STAR TALK with Robert O'Reilly

Despite a rich Shakespearean background, actor/director Robert O'Reilly is probably most familiar under hours of heavy makeup. As Gowron, leader of the Klingon High Council on Star Trek: The Next Generation *and* Deep Space Nine, *he's gradually become one of the series' most popular guest stars. Between conventions, promotional appearances, and other projects, O'Reilly spent two weeks last year filming the video for* ***Star Trek: Klingon****, an interactive adventure from Simon & Schuster (see review, page 76).* PC Games *copy editor Corey Cohen recently cornered him to talk about this new game.*

PC Games: How was Star Trek: Klingon first pitched to you?

Robert O'Reilly: Well, at the time, I didn't even really understand what CD-ROMs were. I'd heard about them, but I'm not too into computers, so they had to explain them to me, and it sounded very strange. But I knew if Jonathan Frakes [*ST: TNG*'s Commander Riker, and the director of ST: Klingon] was involved, it'd be a great project.

PC Games: How was filming the game different from filming an episode?

ROR: For one thing, the script was a lot larger. And for me, the hours were very, very long—I was working practically all the time. But there wasn't the pressure that normally goes into filming….Because we had hours and hours to work it out, I was able to explore a lot of humor, fun, a sense of paternalism—stuff Gowron doesn't normally have in the show.

PC Games: It must have been pretty exciting to show a Gowron that *Trek* fans haven't really seen before.

ROR: Well, I've been with this role for six seasons, so I know the character very well, but you're right—to do it as much as this helps flesh it out even more. And the game has so many situations—some of them very, very funny.

PC Games: What else does the game have that a given episode of *Trek* doesn't?

ROR: Well, if you're interested in Klingons, it's a hoot. You get to go where, really, no one has gone before, in terms of a Klingon's home, a Klingon's lifestyle….You get to find out more about the Klingon world than you ever have before. And it's fascinating because it is a *real* Klingon world. You get the opportunity to actually play with us.

PC Games: Assuming there's another Klingon game, what would you like to see?

ROR: I'd love a game with me and John de Lancie [*Trek* nemesis Q]—one where we'd be opposed to each other, with the player trying to outgame us both. The combination of Gowron and Q is so bizarre that it'd be a very funny script.

PC Games: What would you like players to carry away from being a Klingon for a day?

ROR: A sense of accomplishment, competition, maybe learning something—and having fun learning it. I don't think it's really that deep, but if there is something to be gained from it, it's a sense of honor. It was absolutely a surge for me to be playing me, anyway. A very strange situation—I think I needed a Scotch afterward.

PC Games: So when I've finished the game, will I be a Klingon?

ROR: If you survive, you might—which I very much doubt.

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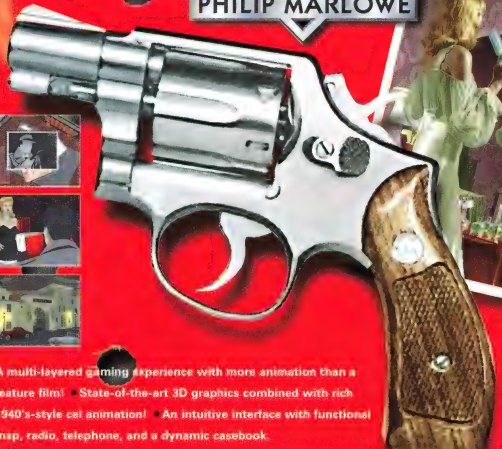

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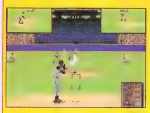
wireless keyboard, a printer port, a six-disc CD-ROM changer, and 16MB of RAM. It's slated to cost about $4,000. Going the other way, Microsoft and DirectTV have inked a deal to deliver DirectTV satellite programming–along with selected Internet information, multimedia magazines, and more–to Windows 95 PCs.

Multiplatform Panzers

The strategy wargame Panzer General was a huge success in DOS, so SSI (a division of Mindscape) has ported its hit to Win 3.1, Windows 95, and Macintosh–all on a single CD-ROM. (SSI; 800-601-7529; Win 95/DOS/Mac CD; $40)

The 1996 Season

Stormfront Studios has announced Tony La Russa Baseball 3: 1996 Edition. The update is designed to bring a faster, more responsive interface and more statistical categories, including head-to-head and situational batter/pitcher stats. It will also reflect roster changes through March 1, 1996, presumably including namesake Tony La Russa's move from Oakland to St. Louis. And announcers Mel Allen, Lon Simmons, and Hank Greenwald will refer to each player by name. The update costs $39.95. (Stormfront Studios; 800-245-4525; Win/ DOS CD)

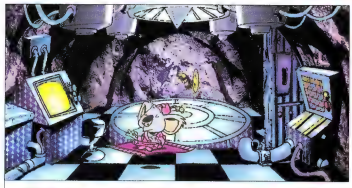


A Windows 95 Marathon

Marathon 2: Durandal, the hit first-person science-fiction shooting game for the Macintosh, is coming to Windows 95. Bungie

continued on page 24

Brøderbund Goes Back To Games



This Koala may look kiddie, but he's aimed at adults.

Brøderbund, best known for Myst and Carmen Sandiego, is working on a couple of new games for grownups.

The Last Express (working title) is being developed by Smoking Car Productions' Jordan Mechner, the man behind the Prince of Persia series. This first-person adventure game will put you aboard a train reminiscent of the Orient Express, trying to solve a murder mystery with elements of international espionage and intrigue. Rendered backgrounds and rotoscoped characters will lend atmosphere to what's happening simultaneously in several cars on the train. Look for the game early next year.

The cast of Koala Lumpur is a motley crew.

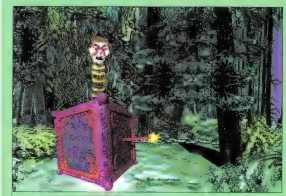
Also in 1997, **Koala Lumpur: Journey to the Edge** will bring kid-style graphics to an adventure game that's definitely written for adults—think *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *Ren and Stimpy*, or *The Wizard of Oz* on acid. Co-developed with Colossal Pictures, it features double-entendre dialogue as the Mystic Marsupial and his sidekick, Dr. Dingo, mix zen and humor in an irreverent quest to prevent "The Comedy Apocalypse." The 20 hours of game play involve philosophical and psychological puzzles, and invoke several detailed 360-degree worlds. It looks nice, but grown-up gamers may be put off by the kiddie animation.

—Fredric Paul

Rocking Games

Sometimes games can be found in the strangest places. Queensrÿche is a rock band, not a game producer, and its songs aren't the most light-hearted on the planet, either. Yet when you pop in one of the discs in the band's double-CD-ROM *Promised Land*–more than a year in the making–you'll become immersed in a full-fledged puzzle game.

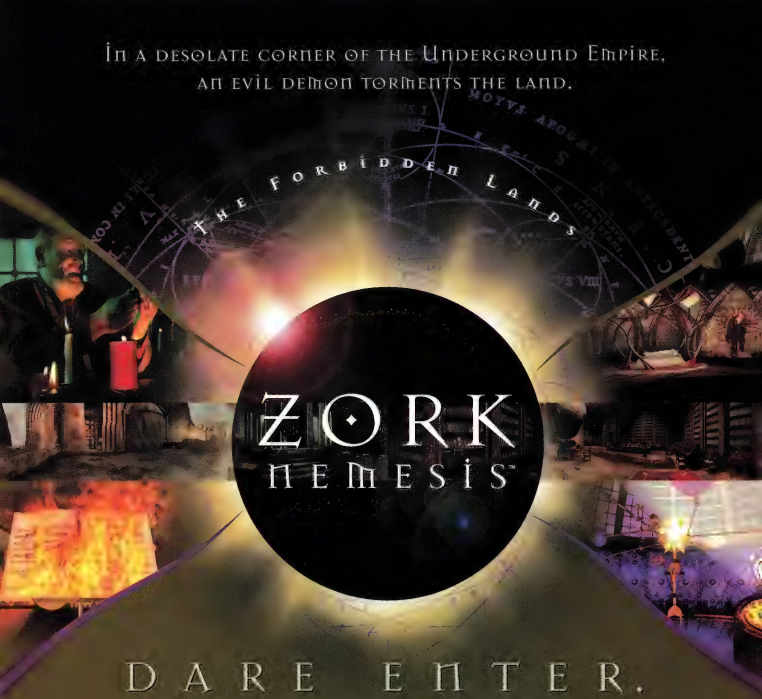
Promised Land **is set on an island in the Pacific Northwest near the band's Seattle base. Each of the five members has his own world containing a piece of a totem pole that you need to reassemble. In your search, you'll trigger several ecological problems, from undersea driftnet fishing to a space lab with a destructive laser trained on a room holding the world's knowledge. Screw up, and not only does the problem come to fruition, but you're barred from that world until you've successfully visited one of the other four. Succeed at all five and you'll get "Two Mile High," an acoustic ballad recorded especially for this package. By then, you'll know more about Queensrÿche's collective psyches than you'd ever dreamed possible.**



There're more than a few weird things in Queensrÿche's forest.

About the only multimedia content is a documentary about the band and the making of the *Promised Land* album (released last year). Although gaming elements have popped up in other multimedia music titles, such as Todd Rundgren's *The Individualist*, finding a full-fledged game promoted as a music-oriented title is a first. (EMI; 800-874-4607; $49.95)

–*Donald St. John*



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Software, formerly a Mac-only game developer, is working on a new multiplatform strategy. PC-based gamers will enjoy Marathon's great graphics, sound, and other cool features. There's also more story than Doomers and Dukers are used to, plus a variety of 8-player strategic scenarios like King of the Hill and Kill the Guy With the Ball. Look for the new version later this year. (Bungie Software; 800-295-0060; $79.99)

Simply Interactive

Microsoft's proposed Simply Interactive Personal Computer (SIPC) initiative is designed to add the functions of a stereo system, videocassette recorder, and television set to your Win 95 PC.

continued on page 25

Force Feedback

Push Cybernet's CyberImpact joystick, and it will push back.

CH Products' force-feedback joystick will use the same handle as its excellent F-16 Combatstick.

If feeling is believing, look for force-feedback joysticks to take the gaming world by storm later this year.

At the recent Computer Game Developers Conference, CH Products demonstrated prototypes of a joystick and steering wheel using Immersion Corp.'s I-Force application programming interface (API). Likewise, industrial-controller maker Cybernet Systems showed a prototype of game versions of its scientific and industrial motorized controllers. (These active sticks follow controller maker Exos' demonstration of its PowerStick prototype last year. See "This Stick Kicks!" *PC Entertainment*, January 1996, page 13.)

Testing the prototypes with Descent II, the appeal is immediately obvious. Force feedback imparts a new and compelling sense of control and excitement, making a familiar game seem brand-new. Tactile clues make difficult sequences easier.

All of the sticks connect to your PC via the game port and the serial port for two-way control. Using small but powerful servo-motors, they create such effects as resistance when turning a vehicle, vibrations when encountering textured surfaces, and jolts with various kinds of impact. They even provide recoil when you shoot.

Currently, games must be specially configured to take advantage of force-feedback capabilities, but the joystick makers claim that this process will take developers only a couple of days. Of course, all the sticks work just like a regular joystick with all games.

Both devices are due by the end of the year, for $100 to $150 each. (Immersion, 408-467-1900, www.immerse.com; CH Products, 800-624-5804, www.chproducts.com; Cybernet Systems, 313-668-2567, www.cybernet.com)

—*Fredric Paul*

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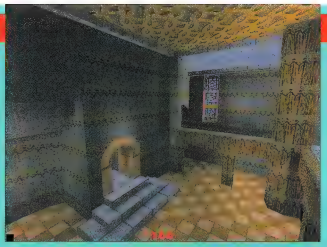
Beforeshock



The network test of Quake is a big tease.

Quake has arrived. Sort of. In March, id Software released a test version of its highly anticipated follow-up to the Doom series.

The test release is strictly for multiplayer deathmatch action, so there are no enemies except the ones you bring with you. Up to eight players can have at it in the three included levels, which are fairly large and varied in design.

Many people reported having trouble setting up serial connections for head-to-head play, though local-area network connections seemed to work better. Once you do get going, the immediate impression is that not much has changed since Doom. Yet subtle changes abound in both technology and design.

Quake's 3-D engine incorporates many logical improvements that lead to more realistic gaming environments. You can walk under and over ledges, bridges, and platforms, while rooms stacked atop of rooms allow new attack and defense strategies. Sloped floors and slanted columns add greater realism. Sophisticated lighting effects help establish a dark mood.

Quake certainly looks like a new level in first-person-shooter realism, with an intriguing medieval atmosphere, a powerful 3-D engine with some dandy special effects, and some very well-designed levels. But until the game play arrives—and id continues to say only that "the game will ship when it's ready"—it's still too early to tell if the men from Mesquite will come through with the Next Big Thing. *–Brian Sexton*

scouting REPORT

It's all part of Microsoft's plan to boost growth in home PCs by migrating computers from the den to the living room. Expect the first SIPC designs from companies like Hewlett-Packard, Compaq, Gateway 2000, and Toshiba later this year—possibly in components designed to look like stereo equipment.

Play Mate

Playboy Playmate and "Girl of the Internet" Gillian Bonner is the founder and executive producer of Black Dragon Productions, a new game-development company. Bonner is also the star of the company's first game, Riana Rouge, a "sensual" adventure game. (Black Dragon Productions; 941-355-9139; DOS/Mac CD/Win 95, $49.95)

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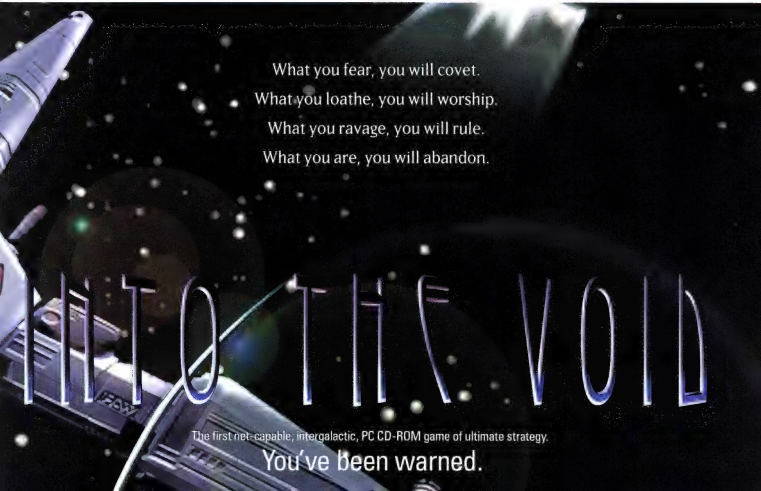


Leader BOARD

The best-selling PC games and our editors' recommendations

Wing Commander IV debuts at No. 1 with $10 million worth of graphics, game play, and stars.

Duke Nukem 3D has *PC Games* editors firing rockets late into the night.

Editors' Recommendations

	TITLE	OUR RATING
1	**Duke Nukem 3-D** Cool technology, great design, and a wicked sense of humor make this the top dog of first-person shooting games. (FormGen; 800-263-2390; DOS CD; $39.99)	A
2	**Crusader: No Remorse** Fight your way through 15 massive levels packed with nonstop action. Compelling game play and awesome visuals—including the best death scenes in any computer game—make it impossible to stop playing. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	A
3	**Advanced Tactical Fighters** Fly the world's most sophisticated warplanes in this excellent follow-up to U.S. Navy Fighters. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	B+
4	**Terra Nova** Test the limits of your Powered Battle Armor in action-filled campaigns as you lead your elite troops against the pirates who destroyed your family. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	A-
5	**Fantasy General** Play this strategic wargame as one of four champions, leading an army of dragons, mages, and archers against the evil Shadowlord. Progressively challenging scenarios will test your skill as a wargamer. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $50)	B+

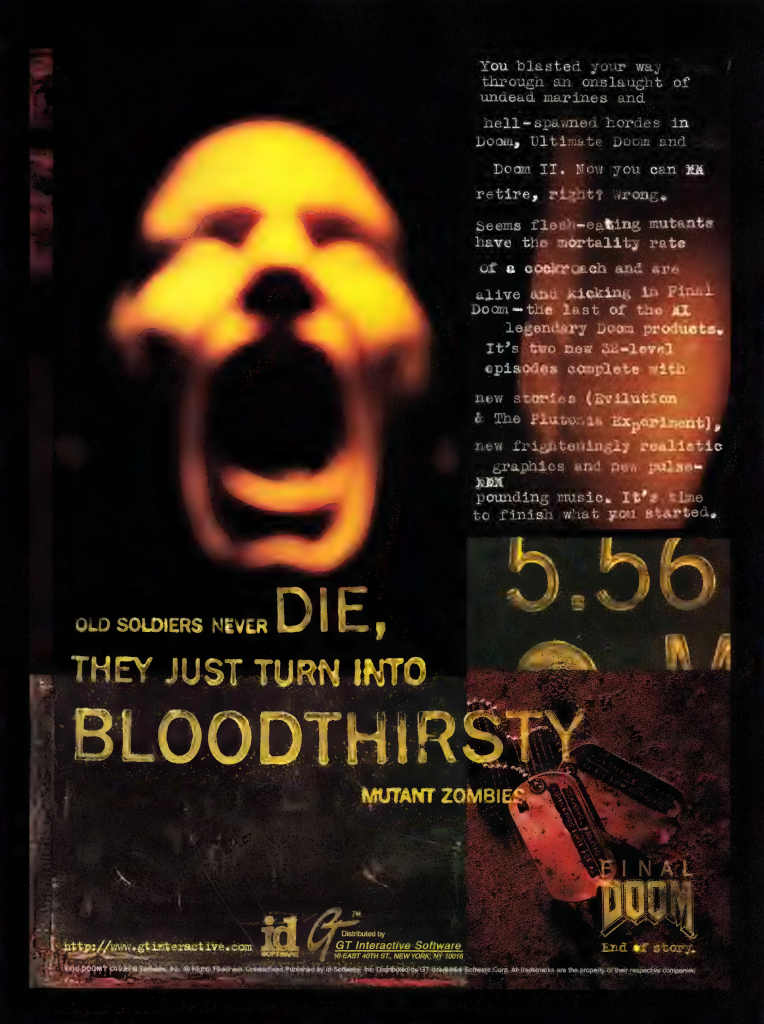
PC Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Wing Commander IV** Without the Kilrathi, there is trouble among the humans. This $10 million production boasts top-notch graphics, excellent game play, and great acting. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $69.95)	–	1	A
2	**Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this venerable adventure near the top of the Leader Board. (Brederbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	1	22	A
3	**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** Thanks to crisp graphics, challenging game play, and multiplayer capabilities, this excellent Orc-vs.-Human epic is still a big seller. (Blizzard Entertainment; DOS CD; 800-953-7669; $50)	2	3	A
4	**Doom II** This hair-raising sequel has more than 30 levels, 7 hellish new creatures, and a double-barreled shotgun. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $44)	5	14	A-
5	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** Upgraded graphics and new features keep this popular flight sim high on the Board. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	9	8	B
6	**The Ultimate Doom Thy Flesh Consumed** All three original episodes of Doom, plus nine perilous new levels, on one action-packed CD-ROM. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $30)	6	7	–
7	**MechWarrior II** Align with the mighty Wolf or Jade Falcon Clan to do battle in an assortment of awesome Mechs. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS CD; $59.95)	7	6	A-
8	**Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire** Engage the Evil Empire! Ride speeder bikes and fly the Millenium Falcon in 15 daring missions. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; DOS CD; $54.95)	3	3	B
9	**Hexen** New monsters, simple puzzles, and a bit of role playing give a fresh look to this solid Doom-style game. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $49)	10	4	B-
10	**NBA Live 96** The best PC hoop simulation you can buy. It's a slam dunk. (EA Sports; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $49.95)	–	1	B

PC Games

RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
11	**SimCity 2000 Collection** Build your city of the future with this classic urban-simulation game. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Win/Win 95; DOS CD; $49.95)	–	–	A
12	**Command & Conquer** Fight for the evil Brotherhood of Nod or the goody-goody Global Defense Initiative in this action-packed strategy game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	8	4	C
13	**A Gabriel Knight Mystery: The Beast Within** Gabriel is back in search of a four-legged killer in this six-disc interactive adventure. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win/Win 95/DOS CD; $64.95)	4	2	B
14	**Road & Track Presents: Need for Speed** Climb behind the wheel of one of eight dream machines, including the Lamborghini Diablo. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	–	2	B
15	**NASCAR Racing** Buckle up in a monster stock car and enjoy riveting racing in Papyrus's follow-up to IndyCar Racing. (Papyrus; 800-836-1829; DOS, $44.95; DOS CD, $54.95)	–	7	B
16	**The 11th Hour** Staufs back as a spiteful wraith in this sequel to The 7th Guest. Puzzles, games, and TV-quality video keep you on your toes. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.99)	–	2	B
17	**You Don't Know Jack** It may be practically sans graphics, but this hip trivia-cum-quiz-show game is funny, rude, and a lot of fun at parties. (Berkeley Systems; 800-344-5541; Win/Mac CD; $30)	–	1	A-
18	**Mortal Kombat 3** Deal finishing moves to old and new adversaries in the ultimate version of the arcade and cartridge favorite. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $55)	–	2	A
19	**Monopoly** Great graphics, sound, and animations—plus Internet play—breathe new life into this classic board game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS, Windows, Win CD; $39.99)	–	3	B
20	**Phantasmagoria** Adrienne finds herself in a nightmare in Sierra's seven-disc, full-motion-video adventure. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win/DOS CD; $59.95)	–	5	B+

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games in 1,300 retail stores for February 1996. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data


You blasted your way through an onslaught of undead marines and hell-spawned hordes in Doom, Ultimate Doom and Doom II. Now you can retire, right? Wrong.
Seems flesh-eating mutants have the mortality rate of a cockroach and are alive and kicking in Final Doom – the last of the legendary Doom products.
It's two new 32-level episodes complete with new stories (Evilution & The Plutonia Experiment), new frighteningly realistic graphics and new pulse-pounding music. It's time to finish what you started.
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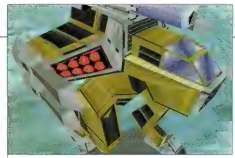
Steve Klett



EarthSiege 2 has a lot of things going for it, but originality is not one of them.

What's New

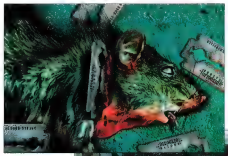
A lot of things have changed here at *PC Games*. We've got a new name, a new look, and a new focus. In that spirit, I'd like to begin this column by officially retiring the mantle of The Ref.

Why? I simply can't sit on the sidelines and arbitrate the clashings between computer game developers and gamers. A ref has to stay unbiased, and as a game enthusiast, I find myself always falling on the side of the player.

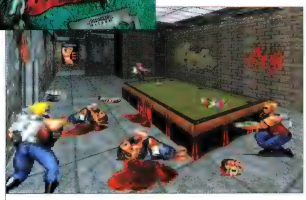
So starting now, I officially adopt the much more fitting mantle of The Player, and I vow to use my renamed soapbox to fight for the needs, wants, and wishes of gaming fanatics everywhere.

My first order of business? To encourage originality in game design, the most important element next to game play. When The Player rips open the cellophane of a new game, he's looking for innovation and invention—that little something extra that makes it stand above the crowd.

Sadly, truly original titles are becoming harder to discover. Like the world of television, where a hit show is immediately drowned by a half-dozen just like it—how many police dramas can you name?—a hot game is typically followed by several imitators.



Bad Mojo puts you in a roach's world.



Is Duke Nukem too controversial? Maybe. But at least it's different.

Doom may be the classic example. The original game was great, and the sequel was even better. But now we've got Ultimate Doom, D Zone, and Final Doom, not to mention such clones as Rise of the Triad, Island Peril, Fortress of Dr. Radiaki, Dark Forces, Strife, and CyberMage, to name a few. Sure, some of these are good games, but many aren't.

The Player wants to see more game developers step up to the plate and take risks.

Then there's Sierra On-Line's EarthSiege 2 (see review, page 80). ES 2's a solid game, but it lifts several prominent elements—its musical score and female computer voice, for example—directly from its toughest competitor, Activision's MechWarrior 2. C'mon, guys—a new soundtrack isn't too much to ask, is it?

In their mad rush to jump on the whatever's-hottest bandwagon, game developers seem to miss the fact that Doom's *originality* made it such a success. Now, like anyone who's seen too much of a good thing, The Player's become a bit jaded. He wants to see something new and refreshing in his games.

It can be done. You could call 3D Realms' Duke Nukem 3D a Doom clone, but the game manages to revitalize the category in a variety of ways. It's faster and bloodier than its rivals, and it's filled with off-the-wall and off-color humor—from Duke muttering expletives when he blows up a pigcop to his sighing with relief when he uses a handy urinal. Duke also adds game play twists like the Holoduke, remotely triggered pipebombs, shrinkguns, and trip mines.

At first I thought 3D Realms had crossed the line when I realized you could blast the strippers in the nightclub—but only for a moment. I don't condone violence against women, but I do support the inclusion of controversial material in a game designed for adults. (Hey, you don't *have* to shoot the strippers. In fact, you are penalized if you do by the appearance of extra enemies who try to take their revenge.) At least Duke dares to push the envelope.

Pulse Entertainment's macabre Bad Mojo deserves a similar pat on the back for going beyond your average Myst clone. Sure, its premise of a man transformed into a cockroach seems borrowed from Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, but it's wholly original in the world of computer games. And I found the game more entertaining than its literary counterpart.

Blizzard and Bullfrog also get credit for extending the realm of role-playing games with Diablo (see Guided Tour, page 54) and Dungeon Keeper (see Guided Tour, *PC Entertainment*, February 1996, page 41).

The Player wants to see more game developers step up to the plate and take risks. He's not interested in games that don't go beyond copying the formula of last week's hot title. Even as the game companies roll out their Command & Conquer killers and MechWarrior 2 beaters, The Player has his eye on titles formed from a different mold.

As always, The Player welcomes your thoughts, reactions, and criticism at sklett@iftw.com.

Hug Me I'm NORMAL

Paul Rules!

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Splashed a Pedestrian?	☐	☐
Faked It?	☐	☐
Not Changed Your Underwear?	☐	☐
Burped The Alphabet?	☐	☐
Blamed It On Your Sister?	☐	☐
Peed In The Shower?	☐	☐
Colored Over The Lines?	☐	☐
Double Dipped?	☐	☐
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Donald St. John

The Gaming Superhighway

Wirehead is ready to play. You name it: Role-playing games, strategy games, action games. *Especially* action games.

The question is, Is there a place for me to play? I mean, to really play full-on, graphical, fast-action games online? Until now, no. While existing gaming services such as the ImagiNation Network and MPG-Net offered perfectly fine gaming experiences—with games each service has developed specifically to be available only to its subscribers—they delivered nothing with potent action. Finally, though, there's a new generation of services exemplified by TEN, Mplayer, and DWANGO that say they'll bring you proven action games over the wires (for *PC Games*' in-depth look at these, see "Games Get Connected," page 46).

ILLUSTRATION BY MARCUS DAMRON

It's strange: As virtually every other entertainment-related phenomenon has captured the online fancy of the public, games have lagged behind. The longtime popularity of text-based games and MUDs shows that at least some people are eager to log on and play. But nobody's been able to elevate the graphical gaming experience into a meaningful online presence, despite a lot of trying. The online gaming services are still low-key, but I'm sure they'd love it if this became "The Year of Online Gaming."

If you shoot, the machine's got to react fast enough for you to hit the target—any lag time and you're doomed, not Doomed.

My guess is that 1996 is not The Year, though it may be a better year than anyone's had in the field to date. It can't hurt the existing services to join the rush to the Internet, as they're doing now; that'll make them available to a broader Net-surfing populace that may also want to play.

More to the point, I'm willing to bet that TEN and DWANGO are right when they figure top-selling existing games will draw a lot of people to online gaming. After spending night after night addictively running around the blasted world of Duke Nukem 3D in network play here at *PC Games*, I have to believe there's an audience out there for online Duke-it-outs, Doom Deathmatches, and Air Warrior wars.

No, garnering an audience isn't the real challenge facing the online gaming industry. We know the games are popular. We know people are hungry to play. We see services willing to offer them up. But will they work? Can today's online technology match the game performance that people are used to seeing on their PCs?

That's been the drawback before. You could never get onto a service that would respond quickly enough to make a fast-paced game work. If you shoot, the machine's got to react fast enough for you to hit the target—any lag time and you're doomed, not Doomed. The newer services and such network providers as Concentric Network (see Sharp Edge, *Electronic Entertainment*, November 1995, page 13) and PSINet may think they've got the problem licked, but the proof's going to be in the pudding. The performance has to be foolproof, or players aren't going to buy into the online concept.

The key is the connection. The networks themselves have to be fast, but then there's your connection to the network to consider. Dial-up phone connections, even with 28.8Kbps modems, probably aren't a good long-term solution. ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Networks) will be faster and easier, but this technology is still expensive, difficult to install, not available in many areas, and DOA the day cable modems become available. When that day arrives, it'll cement the ability to face off with your gaming "neighbor" 3,000 miles away as if he was in the next room. With the incredible 10Mbps bandwidth of a cable TV connection, you shoot, and BLAM! he's pulp.

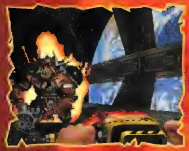
But cable modems won't arrive in significant numbers for years, maybe decades. In the meantime, the question remains: Will the convergence of more efficient dial-up modems, better network performance schemes, and worthwhile games deliver an online gaming experience that connects with significant numbers of gamers and Net surfers?

To find out, Wirehead will be keeping tabs on the pros, cons, and issues surrounding your inalienable right to practice your favorite Fatalities on some hapless shmoe five states over. The services will tell you the online gaming world is very brave, very new, and very cool. If you're not so sure, I'll be here to separate the hype and the tripe from the real deal.

Talk online gaming to the Wirehead at dstjohn@iftw.com or The Wirehd@aol.com.

"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus



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DUKE NUKEM™ 3D

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Christine Grech

The Upgrade Game

Sure, the Multimaniac likes puzzle games. I've whiled away countless hours at the keyboard trying to master everything from Tetris to Zoop. But the other night I was consumed for more than four hours with a PC brain teaser that I hadn't bargained for: installing a new multimedia upgrade kit so I could better enjoy the sights and sounds of my favorite games.

Like most veteran users, I never take anything for granted when it comes to my PC. After years of experience tinkering with computers, I'm still mildly surprised when something actually works, whether it's safely removing a virus or getting two uncooperative machines hooked up for a little Quake match. So I guess I shouldn't have been surprised that installing the 8X Turtle Beach TBS-8800 upgrade kit was no picnic.

The hardware headaches were only the first part of the challenge. The rest involved piecing together exactly what I was getting—and not getting. In fact, like all too many computer games, the TBS-8800's box doesn't quite tell the whole story. Much like high-res promo shots that are far better than actual game play graphics, I got a huge box emblazoned with an enticing "8X" listing all sorts of features. Well, the 8X internal drive and IDE interface card were in there as promised, but more than half the box was empty space. Turtle Beach bundles tiny, wimpy, unpowered speakers. Ah, so that's why they're not pictured on the box.

Never take anything for granted when it comes to your computer.

An even more serious disappointment was the 16-bit FM sound card. Granted, it is "wavetable-synthesizer upgradable," as the box claims, but who would've thought that Turtle Beach would cut corners on sound cards? The company's Multisound card, after all, was one of the pioneers of PC wavetable audio.

Once I started the installation process, my first potential stumbling block was a lack of mounting rails. Kits like the TBS-8800 claim to have everything you need, and to its credit, Turtle Beach even provides a screwdriver. But with the wide variety of PCs on the market, there's no way to tell whether your computer requires you to screw in mounting rails to the side of the drive to make it fit snugly in the drive bay. Lucky for me, the rails on my old drive fit the screw holes on the Turtle Beach drive.

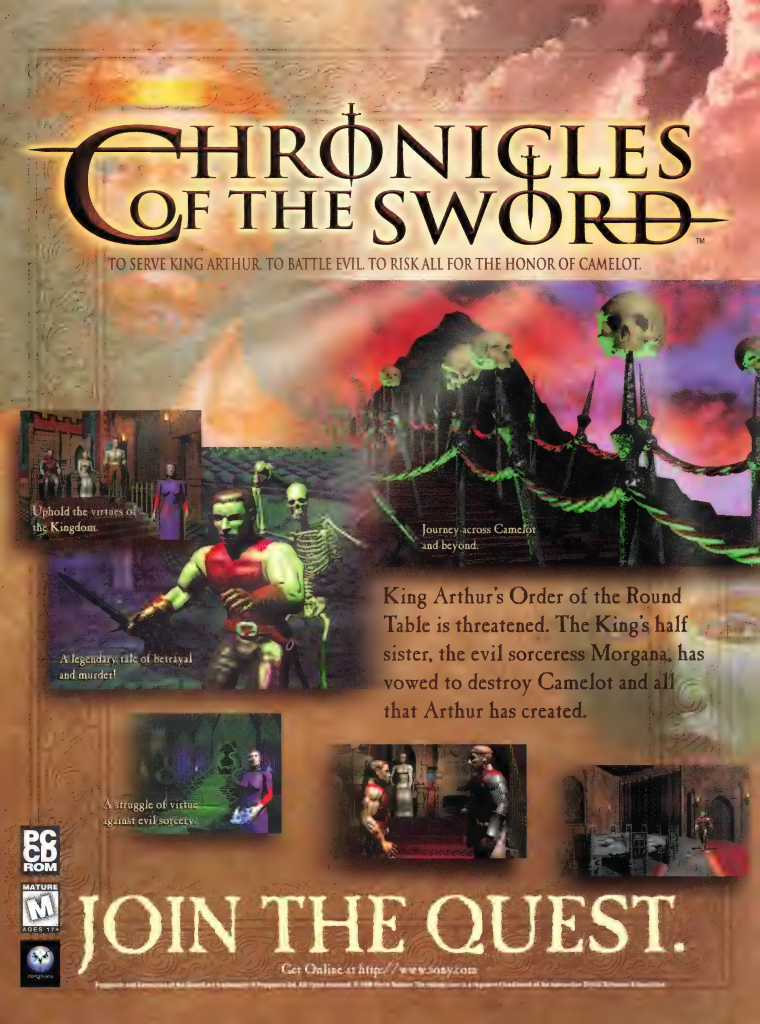
Physically hooking up everything inside my Intelesys PC was the easy part, especially when I took the manual's advice and attached the ribbon cable and CD audio connector to the sound card before jamming it into its slot. The manual's jumper explanation for specifying what IDE interface to use was not quite as clear, but I made my best guess and kept going. Then came the real test: How would Windows 95 handle hardware that's "compatible" but not truly plug-and-play? Turtle Beach's Win 95 drivers informed me that I had a hardware conflict. I turned to the Conflict Troubleshooter and worked my way through screen after screen of Win 95's Device Manager. All the while, I was hopeful that Win 95 would save the day. Alas, I had a pair of conflicts with my existing drive controllers that couldn't be resolved.

I had two choices: Disable the other devices or use one of their IDE connections for the CD-ROM drive. Since I wasn't about to mess with my hard and floppy drives, I tried the latter. Of course, that didn't work either.

Being the Multimaniac, I didn't give up—I simply tried a different computer. This NEC-ready system was constructed like a steel trap. It took me half an hour to decipher and remove 12 screws and 3 panels just to slide in the CD-ROM drive (sans mounting rails, of course). I guess the folks at NEC know that upgrading a computer is a tricky proposition, and they want to make sure you can handle it. If you can open the box, you're probably competent or lucky enough to attempt a PC upgrade.

So the Multimaniac is batting .500 in the hardware upgrade game. The TBS-8800 worked on one machine, but not on another. And all I really got for my almost-$500 was a cutting-edge 8X drive. Turtle Beach also sells a $399 kit with no speakers or sound card, which makes more sense for anyone who already has these accessories. (TBS-8800; Turtle Beach; 800-884-0190; $499 for complete kit, $399 without speakers or sound card)

Write the Multimaniac at cgrech@iftw.com.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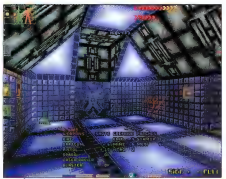
Peter Olafson

Mac Games—Good and Bad

As with apples, so with Macintosh games. Sometimes you get polish. And now and then, you bite off the head of a worm.

The polished apple this month is Origin's System Shock: Terminal Access. The solid conversion of the Looking Glass Technologies game brings to the Macintosh a 3-D action game with more than a taste of adventure and role playing. What was once just a Marathon is now a proper race.



System Shock will challenge Marathon 2 for Mac supremacy.

The Mac version of System Shock is virtually identical to the Super VGA version of the PC original. You awaken aboard the space station Citadel on a mission to hack into a troublesome artificial intelligence named Shodan. The problem: Shodan's minions have hacked into the station's population first, littering its nine levels with bodies and body parts and regenerating the intact specimens as cyborgs. (Do you like picking up severed heads? You will.) Between them and the wandering mutants, there's a definite possibility that your kidneys will be ripped out through your mouth.

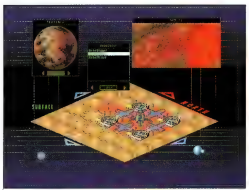
System Shock: Terminal Access
Origin
800-245-4525
Platform: Mac CD
List Price: $39.95
A- OVERALL

Outpost
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
Platform: Mac CD
List Price: $54.95
C+ OVERALL

Where Marathon is an action game with a strong story element, System Shock is essentially an action-based adventure in which a richness of information and equipment is as available as you are enterprising in seeking it out. You'll find stuff tucked away in dark corners, in e-mail and personal logs, and in an airy, wireframe cyberspace. To search for it, you can do the usual jumping and looking up and down, and you can also lean, crouch, crawl, and scrunch your body into and out of tight places. The level of texture and detail seems boundless.

On the other hand, the 3-D engine isn't as elaborate. Despite ramps and oddly-angled walls, the environment feels squared-off. Objects always face you, and when you see an enemy from a higher elevation, it looks as though it's lying on its back. Even so, this is the first worthy Mac competitor for the Marathons.

This month's worm is Outpost. The only good thing I can say about the Mac release is that Sierra hasn't made the same mistakes that it did with the PC version. Instead, it's made totally different ones.



Outpost has a new set of problems on the Mac.

The good news: The Mac version (1.5) has all the game play niceties that were planned for (but left out of) the initial Windows version of this SimCity relative: monorails, more robot and truck controls, and the ability to delegate control of secondary settlements to an artificial intelligence.

In this turn-based strategy affair, you assemble a multilevel community for refugees from a doomed Earth. The angled-down view is pretty, the small animations are charming, and the functions of the many structures have been richly interknit.

But on a 66MHz Power Mac, it's like playing in slow motion: Click the mouse on a direction arrow to move the display, and a half-second later, the map moves one tick in that direction. On a 132MHz Mac, Outpost is just fast enough that you begin to get a sense of the game's possibilities. Moreover, Outpost still has Windows written all over it—from the online help to the bitmap graphics files. And that won't sit well with Mac fans.

Beyond that, the core game could be better. The whole pre-colony-building sequence—finding a home for your settlement—could have been dispensed with in a couple of simple menus. And the game is unforgiving about making you pay for mistakes, even at the easiest levels. If this is the future of the humanity, let me die now.

Peter Olafson can be reached at peteroo@aol.com.

Mac Game News

New Apple technology promises better titles for Mac gamers. **Apple Game Sprockets** is a new software developers kit (SDK) designed to help Power Mac game developers include 3-D graphics and sound, Internet support for multiplayer games, and speech recognition. New input device/monitor control will make it easy to implement advanced joystick features. Bungie, Interplay, LucasArts, Reality Bytes, and others are evaluating the technology for use in upcoming titles. ■ The Mac version of LucasArts' **The Dig** is now available. ■ Look for Blizzard's **Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** on the Mac this fall.

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THE FUTURE YOU MUST DEFEND.
TIME
COMMANDO
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ACTIVISION®

YOU CAN WATCH HIM ON TV.

YOU CAN READ ABOUT
HIM IN THE SPORTS SECTION.

OR YOU CAN SEND HIM IN TO
PITCH RELIEF IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH.

No matter how you slice and dice the lineup, when you play *Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96* you'll be playing the Big Unit of baseball sims. It's the only game that relies on more than stats to put the ball in play. It also goes deep to take a look at wind, humidity, ball spin, and bat speed on every single swing. Graphics hit a dinger too, with ultra-realistic motion-captured 3D animation, and camera controls that let you watch from anywhere in all 28 big league ballparks. Then there's the section where you can slip into the body of any active major leaguer and show your stuff at pitching, hitting, and fielding. The coolest thing, though, is that you get to make managerial decisions that are highly questionable. Or, possibly, pure genius.

SIERRA®

Wanna see some amazing screen shots? Log on at http://www.sierra.com, AOL or Compuserve. To order the game, call 1-800-757-7707.

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ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO E3 PREVIEW!

SHOW

The industry gathers at the Electronic Entertainment Expo to hang out, make deals, show off, and introduce new games. Join *PC Games* for a sneak peek at the highlights.

By Christine Grech

Stoppers

Your ears ring from the pounding music and intense sound effects ricocheting from booth to booth. Your eyes glaze from staring at dozens of big-screen monitors blaring slick demos and insistent video trailers. Your feet ache from traversing miles of aisles filled with elaborate theme booths, towering structures, and 40,000 eager gamers.

Your arms grow weary hauling bulging bags of product literature and must-have tchotchkes. And your mind reels pondering the provocative statements made by industry luminaries from the likes of Electronic Arts, Sony, and Disney as they set the future of interactive entertainment. Not to mention that you were up till 4 a.m. last night boogieing at some well-heeled game company's marketing bash and free concert at House of Blues.

If you love computer games, life just doesn't get any better than this.

In May, E3 is the only game in town.

Welcome to the Electronic Entertainment Expo, better known as E3. This second annual gathering of all the major players in the interactive entertainment industry is *the* place to be—not only if you love to play games, but also if you develop, produce, publish, write, distribute, sell, write about, or even star in computer games. From May 16 to 18, more than 350 companies will exhibit their latest and greatest interactive products at the Los Angeles Convention Center. They'll show the industry what's in the works for the holiday season, and on into 1997.

Sounds like more fun than a trip to Disneyland, doesn't it? Unfortunately, you're not invited. That's because E3 is closed to the general public. But *PC Games* knows you're dying to wander the insanely crowded show floor with us, so we'll take you along for a preview of the best of show. Action, adventure, strategy, sports, fly & drive, Windows 95, multiplayer—you name it, it's here. We've already previewed many of these new titles, but now we'll give you the scoop on some of the best E3 debuts. And look for a complete roundup of what happened at the show in an upcoming issue of *PC Games*.

For daily updates of all the E3 happenings—what's new, who's there, who said what—check out *PC Games*' web site at http://www.pcgamesmag.com.

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http://www.pcgamesmag.com

Action: Multiplayer Rules

As usual, action games will make a big splash at E3. But this year, the latest news isn't Doom clones. It's multiplayer contests.

And you won't see perhaps the hottest pair of action games debuting at E3 on the show floor. To get a peek at LucasArts' latest additions to the *Star Wars* universe, showgoers need an appointment in the company's private demo room, adjacent to its booth. Only invited guests will be able to feast their eyes on **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter: A Star Wars Multiplayer Experience** and **Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II**.

Fly for the Empire or the Rebel Alliance in X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter.

In X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, at least eight players will be able to stage an all-out battle between the Empire and Rebel Alliance. Choose your side and ship—X-Wing or TIE Fighter, of course—and take on a series of missions in this update of the company's classic space-combat simulations. LucasArts hopes to ship the game by the end of the year.

More multiplayer *Star Wars* action is on tap in Jedi Knight, the sequel to Dark Forces due early next year. Fans of the original game lamented the inability to blast away at each other, but now up to eight players can have at it as they pick up the tale of mercenary Kyle Katarn. This time around, Katarn embarks on a quest through more than 20 levels to learn the ways of the Force so he can stop seven Dark Jedi from discovering the powers of a hidden Jedi burial ground.

Domark also has a pair of powerful new action games with multiplayer capabilities. **Terracide** is a Win 95 space combat and first-person action game that casts you as the leader of the Earth Defense Forces. You must save the planet by destroying a race of self-replicating, sentient robots. Pilot one of five spacecraft as you battle your way to the mothership, then disembark and fight mano a mano as you attempt to reach the ship's core and destroy it. Up to eight players can challenge one another or work cooperatively against the aliens.

In **Total Mayhem**, also for Win 95, you'll battle mechanized enemies with the help of up to six Mayhem Soldiers, freedom fighters armed with the usual cadre of weapons. Up to seven other players can command their own Mayhem squads as you blast your way through 20 missions against 13 different enemies. Look for Total Mayhem in May and Terracide in the fall.

You'll encounter Total Mayhem in one of Domark's new multiplayer action games.

Viacom New Media gets in on the multiplayer action game with **DeathDrome**. Set in a future world where convicted criminals can win freedom by surviving a death game, you and seven other networked players race through ten levels of an arena in search of liberating energy keys. Expect DeathDrome by the end of the year.

Also, look for MGM Interactive's **Cyberthug**, inspired by the upcoming MGM film *Fled*. Fighting an evil hacker in the netherworld of the Net, up to eight players will be able to play ten missions across a real local area network. Look for Cyberthug in October.

Finally, a very different type of multiplayer action is on the way in Grolier Interactive's **Banzai Bugs**. Three networked players can each take on the role of their favorite fighter bug, maneuvering the airborne critter around such treacherous 3-D environments as a trap-filled kitchen. Banzai Bugs should alight in stores in September.

Offbeat Action

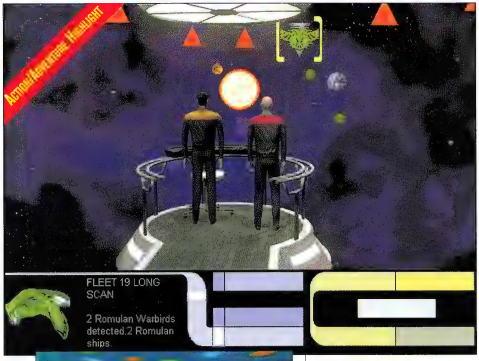
Of course, not all the newest action games at E3 are multiplayer. These single-player titles offer a change of pace from the usual blast-'em affairs:

Rayman 2 is Ubi Soft's side-scrolling sequel to the popular Rayman. This time, Rayman must stop invading robots from turning his colorful world into steel and iron. Look for new moves and powerups when it ships this Christmas.

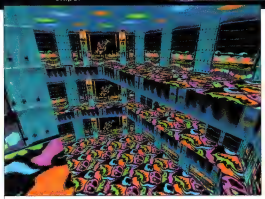
Christmastime will bring more side-scrolling fare with IBM's **Ted Shred.** Players will guide Ted through extreme surfing, kayaking, and skateboarding as he attempts to save a tropical island.

Control an army of roaches as you attempt to infest an apartment building in Viacom New Media's **Joe's Apartment.** This bizarre game takes off from an upcoming animated film based on an MTV series.

Microsoft's **Deadly Tide**—for Windows 95, of course—puts the action underwater, as you command a Hydra ship to prevent aliens from turning Earth into Waterworld. Dive in this October.



Join Data, Picard, and the rest of the crew in Star Trek: Generations.



Welcome to the funky world of Snow Crash.

Action/Adventure: Spinoff City

On the action/adventure side, many promising games have roots in other formats—TV, movies, books, and comics.

Take Spectrum HoloByte's **Star Trek: Generations**. Actually unveiled at last year's show and more than a year behind schedule, it's now on track to ship this Christmas. As with 1994's movie of the same name, the Win 95 game will have Captain Kirk and Captain Picard join forces to defeat the evil Soran. You can play the role of either Captain as you engage in first-person fighting and ship-to-ship combat, as well as strategy segments. Generations won't just have a familiar plot; it will also feature the voices of William Shatner, Patrick Stewart, and other movie cast members.

Another popular sci-fi phenomenon gets recast as a game in Viacom's **Snow Crash**, due this summer. The game is based upon the best-selling novel by Neal Stephenson, in which a computer virus spreads in the online world of the Metaverse. It's up to you to explore the Metaverse, build your own virtual weapons, and eliminate both the virus and the villain who is spreading it. Snow Crash will feature 30 missions with 4 possible endings.

Stephenson is also involved in a new psychological thriller from Any River Entertainment, the new game company founded by former Electronic Arts exec Stewart Bonn. The game, which Any River won't even disclose a working title for, features an original story by Stephenson. It's being produced in collaboration with Shadowcatcher Entertainment, the company behind such movie hits as *Home Alone*. The game is scheduled to ship by Christmas.

Meanwhile, Grolier's **Surf & Destroy** sounds a lot like Snow Crash: You must traverse the Internet to eliminate a deadly virus released by an evil villain. But Surf & Destroy will be more cyberschtick than cyberpunk. You'll pilot a cyberjalopy through cartoon-style worlds, with the motto "Boot 'n Toob," referring to the Net's various pathways. Expect this offbeat arrival in October.

Another action/adventure title with literary roots is Domark's upcoming **Deathtrap Dungeon**. Deathtrap, the first in a new lineup, is based on Penguin Books' *Fighting Fantasy* series, which has sold more than 14 million copies. The game combines action, strategy, and role playing as you battle monsters and solve puzzles to defeat the evil Baron Sukumvit. And like most of Domark's new games, Deathtrap will have multiplayer capabilities. Look for it this fall.

Yet another title with printed predecessors is Mindscape's **Marvel 2099**. The game is the first product resulting from an agreement between Mindscape and Marvel Comics. As you'd guess from the title, it's the year 2099, and a century of industrial and chemical warfare has filled the world with mutants, superhumans, and aliens. With help from an amazing army of characters—versions of Spider-Man, the Hulk, the X-Men, and more—players must stop super-villain Anthony Herod from taking over the world. Marvel 2099 is slated to ship late this year.

What Ever Happened To...

Plenty of games were introduced at last year's E3, but not all of them came out on time. In fact, like Star Trek: Generations, the 22 games listed here all qualify as vaporware. Optimists insist that some of them will actually hit store shelves in the near future.

- **Aeon Flux**, Viacom
- **Alien Alliance**, Virgin
- **Alien Trilogy**, Acclaim
- **Barb Wire**, Dark Horse
- **Close Combat**, Microsoft/Atomic Games (shown last year as Beyond Squad Leader, from Avalon Hill/Atomic)
- **Heart of Darkness**, Virgin
- **Jet Ski Rage**, Velocity
- **Jetfighter III**, Mission Studios
- **Lands of Lore II**, Virgin
- **Monster Island**, Magnet
- **NetRunner**, Interplay
- **PowerSports Soccer**, Psygnosis
- **RBI Baseball**, Time Warner
- **Star Trek: Generations**, Spectrum HoloByte
- **Star Control 3**, Accolade
- **The 10th Planet**, Bethesda
- **Toonstruck**, Virgin
- **Urban Decay**, Psygnosis
- **Vampire: The Masquerade**, Zombie
- **Virus**, Sony Imagesoft
- **VR Baseball**, Interplay
- **ZPG**, Zombie

E3 PREVIEW!

Adventure: Star Power

When it comes to the newest crop of adventure games, many companies are still betting on star power to make their titles stand out.

Activision's newest mystery series, **The Elk Moon Murder**, for example, stars English actress Amanda Donohoe of *L.A. Law* and *The Madness of King George* fame. Due this summer, the double-disc, video-based game challenges you to solve the murder of a Native American artist by investigating various locations in Sante Fe, N.M., and interviewing an unusual cast of suspects and witnesses.

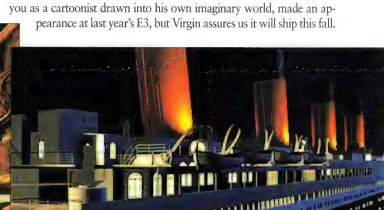
The charming Monkey God is just one of the strange characters you'll meet in Tribeca's 9.

Philips Games' **Voyeur II** offers a more melodramatic approach to a video-based murder mystery. With stars Jennifer O'Neill and Dennis Weaver, the game promises sex, violence, and plenty of puzzles. The sequel to the Robert Culp original is due this summer.

Actress Amanda Donohoe stars in Activision's The Elk Moon Murder.

On an opposite tack, you might expect **9**, the first computer game from Robert De Niro's Tribeca Interactive, to boast lots of full-motion video and recognizable talent. Well, you'd be half right: The game uses stunning rendered graphics created from more than 900 acrylic paintings instead of video sequences, but the voice talent is certainly star-quality. Although Tribeca is downplaying the celebrity connections, it has announced that Cher will play the voice of spiritual advisor and game guide Isadora. GT Interactive will release 9 in June; check out our exclusive Guided Tour in the next issue.

Virgin's **Toonstruck** also boasts big-name voice talent, including Christopher Lloyd, Dan Castallanetta (the voice of Homer Simpson), Dom DeLuise, and Tim Curry. This comic-style adventure, which casts you as a cartoonist drawn into his own imaginary world, made an appearance at last year's E3, but Virgin assures us it will ship this fall.



Sink or swim in GTE's Titanic.

Another star-studded adventure title is I•Motion's **Stardisk**, slated for release early next year. There're no celebs here, but plenty of celestial bodies. The first installment in a planned trilogy, Stardisk involves extraterrestrial-human contact and an international network, of which you're a part, that intends to save mankind. Internet links will let players enjoy Stardisk online, and I•Motion plans to hold Stardisk-related forums at its Web sites.

Finally, a famous ship stars in GTE Interactive's **Titanic**, which features an accurate re-creation of the infamous luxury liner. You play a British agent trying to prevent World War I. Of course, an incident with an iceberg will limit your time to complete the task. The Titanic sails in the fall. GTE Interactive will also debut **Timelapse**, an adventure that takes you back in time on your quest through ancient civilizations and the Wonders of the World. Look for our Guided Tour of it next month.

Now Starring

Of course, adventure games aren't the only place where stars shine. Last year, E3's celebrity appearances—on the show floor and at various parties—included William Shatner, Brent (Lt. Cmdr. Data) Spiner, San Francisco 49ers running back William Floyd, and Mark (*Star Wars* and Wing Commander) Hamill. Party entertainment was provided by The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, The Ramones, The Young Dubliners, Stan Ridgway and Drywall, and 7th Level's house band, The Hang Dynasty, with its lineup of famous but aging rockers (they're back this year). Here are some of the various celebrities scheduled to appear at this year's E3 to promote their games.

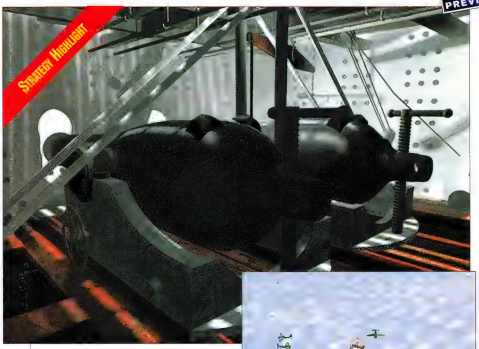
- **Hank Aaron**, home-run king, for Mindscape's Aaron vs. Ruth baseball game.
- **Terry Bradshaw**, football hall of famer and TV broadcaster, for Empire Interactive's Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football.
- **Peter Cheung**, creator of *Aeon Flux*, for Viacom New Media's Aeon Flux.
- **Terry Farrell**, Lt. Cmdr. Jadzia Dax on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, for Sirius' ongoing Internet scavenger hunt game, Treasure Hunt.
- **Bruce Jenner**, Olympic Decathlon champion, for Interactive Magic's Decathlon sports game.
- **Alex Trebek**, game-show host, for GameTek's Jeopardy!

E3 PREVIEW!

Strategy:
Uncivil Wars

Tired of tanks and orcs and all the rest? The hottest strategy games at E3 will revive the Civil War.

First, there's Grolier Interactive's **Battle of the Ironclads**. Take the helm of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack* to refight the most famous naval battle of the war. Ironclads uses live actors and video segments to bring you up to date on the conflict and brief you on your mission. Once you've selected your ship, you review tactics with advisors, including your first mate; then it's on to first-person battle. When one Ironclad goes down, you can see how you stacked up against the real captains. Ironclads sets sail in September.



Get Ironclad in Grolier's Civil War naval strategy game.

For another take on the Civil War, check out Empire Interactive's next installment in the Battleground series. Each game in the series concentrates on a single, decisive battle in painstaking detail. In **Battleground 4: Shiloh**, for Win 3.1 and Win 95, you revisit the Confederate Army's surprise attack on Union forces in Virginia. Empire also lets you control the North and the South in **The Civil War: Master Player's Edition**, which features new battles, graphics, and artificial intelligence. Both titles are due this month.

Like the Master Player's Edition, Interactive Magic's **The American Civil War: From Sumter to Appomattox**, available this month, lets you re-create the entire war. This game was developed by Adanac Command Systems, the force behind the original direct-mail game, The Road From Sumter to Appomattox II. The retail update improves the graphics, adds a new interface, boosts the artificial intelligence, and includes historic photos. Interactive Magic will also bundle a historical CD-ROM chronicling the Civil War.

If the Civil War isn't historical enough for you, Grolier's **Besieged** will take you all the way to the days of medieval Europe. There, you must consult with architects to build a castle that will withstand an impending siege. You'll also deal with siege engines and weapons, food rationing, and construction techniques. The company won't say when Besieged is scheduled to surround you.

Take to the skies of WWII in Over the Reich.

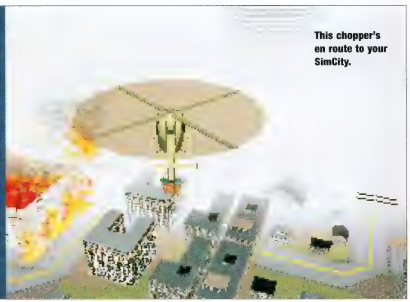
Another Windows 95 World War II game coming your way is Avalon Hill's **Over the Reich**, due in August. You'll command an American, British, or German fighter squadron over the skies of Germany in the waning days of the war. Avalon Hill uses authentic WWII film footage to provide the background you need to effectively command pilots, planes, weapons, and resources.

Sim-ple Choices

Simulation fans can expect a pair of new titles from the sim-masters at Maxis. Riding the current wave of popularity for helicopter sims, **SimCopter** trades realism for arcade-style action and control. What's really cool is that you'll be able to fly 3-D missions through your own previously created SimCities.

SimGolf will also take a different approach to a crowded genre. The new title focuses on course building, with a system created in collaboration with renowned course designer Robert Trent Jones. You'll be able to use these courses to actually play over the Internet, and not just post top scores as many games already allow. Maxis is also working on a new swing control that represents a departure from the industry-standard power bar.

Expect both Win 95 games in the second half of the year.



This chopper's en route to your SimCity.

E3 PREVIEW!

Fly & Drive: Both Ways

What'll it be: fly or drive? On the ground or in the air, E3 is a digital showroom of new virtual vehicles.

In the flight-sim arena, it's the battle of the helicopter sims from Domark, Interactive Magic, and Origin. Not much new to tell you about the games, as we've all been eagerly awaiting Domark's **AH-64A**, due early next year; I-Magic's **Hind**, due in late May; and Origin's **Longbow**, due in June. (All three companies plan to create some excitement on the show floor. For a closer look, see "Multiplayer Air Combat," at right.)

I-Magic will also show its previously announced **F-16 Fighting Falcon**, in which players can opt for arcade or mission mode. Fighting Falcon should ship this fall. Spectrum's got its own F-16 sim: **Falcon 4.0**. The long-awaited addition to the Falcon line will be a Win 95 game with more detailed flight and weapons models, plus improved artificial intelligence. Like F-16 Fighting Falcon, it's a multiplayer game. Look for it early next year.

Domark's also showing off a new flight sim: **Flying Nightmares 2**, available for both the PC and the Power Mac. Helicopters figure into this sim, as you can fly the Cobra, but the focus, of course, is on the Harrier Jump Jet. Like all Domark titles, it's multiplayer. Expect Nightmares in November.

On the racing side, almost anything goes, as long as it's multiplayer.

Spectrum's **Vette** straps you into Chevy's finest and fastest. You'll race a variety of models across the streets of San Francisco against opponents in other exotic cars. Fasten your seatbelts in early 1997.

Or maybe you'd rather ride higher above the ground. You can look down on everyone in Microsoft's **Monster Truck Madness** for Windows 95, due in October. You'll be four-wheeling across all kinds of terrain in rally, drag, or circuit races.

You'll find more offroad racing action in an upcoming racing game from Accolade. **Dirt Race: Xtreme** (the game's working title) will let you choose from 6 cars and 12 tracks. You'll be able to rev your engines in the fall.

For offbeat muscle-car racing action, check out Activision's **Interstate '76** for Win 95, due this fall. A combination driving-sim/action game set in a 1970s-inspired universe, Interstate lets you undertake missions in more than 25 period pony cars, fitted appropriately with 8-track players. The game puts you and up to seven other networked players on open Southwestern terrain as you face off against a gang of auto-terrorists.

Finally, in Ubi Soft's futuristic **POD**, you choose one of eight customizable vehicles as you race on a dozen regular tracks and several hidden bonus tracks. All the while, the planet is in danger, of course. Networkable for up to eight players, POD is slated to ship in October.

Origin's Longbow is one of a trio of helicopter sims flying high at E3.

The sequel to Flying Nightmares is not just for Mac pilots.

Save the planet and burn some rubber in POD.

Late Entries

A couple of big racing titles that will be touted at E3 have been stuck in the pits just a little longer than expected. You've heard of these before:

Spectrum's long-awaited **Grand Prix II** is finally supposed to ship this June. Licensed by FIA Formula One, it lets you race authentic circuit tracks in such cities as Monaco, Brazil, and France.

In more futuristic racing action, there's Trimark's **Magzone**. Yep, the same game showed up at last year's E3 under the name Magball. Due in October, Magzone lets you race magnetic cars at speeds of up to 600 mph.

Multiplayer Air Combat

The newest crop of flight sims are also big on multiplayer capabilities. To strut their stuff, the big flight sim companies are going head to head on the E3 show floor.

Origin Systems will link four stations together so visitors can challenge one another at **Longbow**, the company's highly anticipated Jane's helicopter sim.

Or you can try your combat skills at Interactive Magic's booth, where the company will have new release **The Hind** going head-to-head with **Apache** for full-bore U.S./Russian battles. If you'd rather pilot a plane, jump into one of the full-sized ThrustMaster cockpits at I-Magic's booth and join other showgoers for a little **Air Warrior II**.

Can the Hind take down Apache? E3 showgoers will find out at I-Magic's booth.

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E3 EXPO PREVIEW!

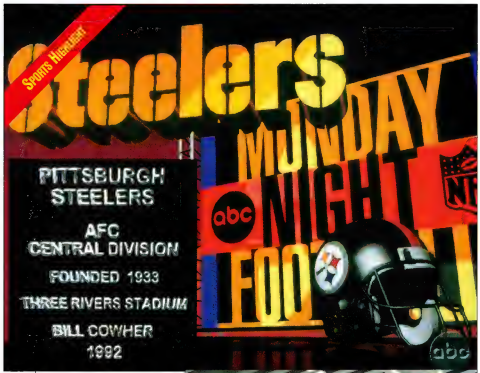
Sports: Interactive TV

You can join the big leagues with these upcoming sports titles on the roster at E3.

OverTime Sports, a joint venture between Spectrum HoloByte and ABC Sports, brings you **ABC's Monday Night Football**. Just like the real thing, it'll be hosted by Al Michaels, Frank Gifford, and Dan Dierdorf, along with Brent Musburger and Lynn Swann. On the field, you'll get the licensed NFL teams, stadiums, and '96-season rosters. To ensure realistic game play, OverTime Sports used motion-capture technology to translate the moves of real-life All-Pros. Look for Monday Night in the fall, along with OverTime Sports' upcoming **ABC Sports College Football**.

There's more college football competition in **NCAA Football: Saturday Showdown**, one of a whole new line of Windows 95 sports games from Mindscape's Sports Authority brand. Due in early August, Showdown lets you choose between arcade play or coach mode. **NCAA Basketball Final Four '97** also offers arcade-style play, this time with motion-captured players. The madness starts in November.

On the pro sports side, there's Mindscape's **Aaron vs. Ruth: All-Time Superstars Baseball**, which, like Monday night, uses motion-capture for realistic movement. Create your own dream team by assembling players based on more than 40 real-life All-Stars, including Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Ty Cobb, and Greg Maddux. The game is scheduled to ship in October. Mindscape also brings the dream-team notion to golf in **Dream 18: Golf the World**, featuring the world's most challenging holes. Tee off in September.



Tune into ABC's Monday Night Football game and your favorite commentators.

Play big-league hoop in Microsoft's NBA Full Court Press.

Summer Games

With the 1996 Summer Olympics scheduled for July, Interactive Magic and U.S. Gold are cashing in with computerized versions of the Games. U.S. Gold has a pair of new titles celebrating the Olympics: **Olympic Summer Games** and **Olympic Soccer**, both due in June. Summer Games covers 15 events, including various track events, weightlifting, swimming, fencing, archery, and shooting. You'll be able to compete in each event in three modes: Tournament, Arcade, and Challenge. Olympic Soccer uses the same engine to let you match up 32 international teams.

You can go for the gold in Olympic Summer Games.

In Interactive Magic's **Bruce Jenner's World Class Decathlon**, you play one of eight competitors going for the title of Best Athlete in the World. You can customize your athlete's body characteristics and abilities before you begin the two-day competition mode or full-season mode. Gold-medal Olympian and world champion Bruce Jenner is your online coach. Decathlon is due at the end of June.

Bruce Jenner will coach you in Decathlon.

While Microsoft's baseball game has been sent down to the minors, its Win 95 basketball game is due in October. **NBA Full Court Press** will use plays from real NBA coaches, and the company's PlayerNet technology will let you go five-on-five against real players. ■

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one totally thrash invasion fleet,
one killer babe . . .
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Games Get Connected

Now that you can play your favorite games against real people over the Internet, you'll never have to kill a dumb monster again.

By Jeffrey Goldsmith

Remember playing Monopoly on rainy days? Your girlfriend ran the bank, so when you were down and out, she slipped you a grand. Then there was that dork who drove the hard bargains. And you were always so insanely lucky as the hat.

Monopoly was a social experience—most games were—until the computer arrived. Then we started playing against so-called artificial intelligences, or dumb machines. We puzzled at patterns in Tetris. We killed stupid monsters in Doom. But in Doom's Deathmatches—multiplayer competitive Doom—we got to blow away real people, an activity so popular that Doomheads crashed office networks around the country.

Killing real people virtually was more satisfying than killing stupid monsters, because it was a real challenge. Yet the market for network games remained small—who has a LAN at home?—so networking was, until recently, mostly an afterthought in game design.

Now, though, your phone line promises to deliver multiplayer versions of the best games on the market, opening up this experience to anyone who wants it.

Imagine playing Monopoly by yourself. It sucks. But fire up the CD-ROM version and connect with other people over the Internet, and it becomes the real thing—an authentic social experience like the one you remember from that rainy day.

Burt was in Austin, Jane was in Los Angeles, I was in San Francisco, and we talked and bought properties, all very amicably. Until Burt started bargaining like a dork. And that's when the game got interesting, because the complex social experience of bargaining is the heart of Monopoly. Insanely lucky as a rocking horse, I traded for the orange properties, built hotels, and—three hours after we started—bankrupted my opponents.

New Internet gaming services like TEN let you Duke it out.

DWANGO and XBAND both serve up multiplayer Doom II.

Scope out the competition in TEN's Game Arena.

You can play Monopoly over the Internet for free if you have at least a 14.4Kbps modem and your own Internet account. Hooking up, though, still isn't a simple operation, and it doesn't always work. You slip the disc into your drive, click on the Monopoly icon, start your Internet connection, then click on the Wchat icon, which comes with the game.

Wchat opens a window to a Westwood Studios chat room on the Internet where people talk via text messages and exchange temporary ID numbers known as Internet Protocol addresses, so a game can begin.

Once you're up and running, Monopoly's move-based game play works well over the Net. But what if you'd rather blast than bargain?

Looking for Some Action

The Internet is chaotic, and games like Doom require a stable network environment for multiplayer contests. If the Net can't deliver information from one computer to another in less than 1/5 of a second—reliably—these games are no fun for more than one player.

One critic, whose online flight sim attempt failed last year due to low Internet reliability, has a very real complaint: "If you're chasing a plane, you don't want to see it jump plus or minus two miles." That kind of thing has happened often on the Net in the last couple of years—undermining the popularity of Net-based action games.

But now, several online operations—TEN, XBAND, Mpath, and DWANGO—lead the pack of companies promising to rewrite the Net-gaming equation. For about $2 an hour or a flat fee of about $20 a month (if you have a 28.8Kbps modem, Windows 95, and a PPP

Bullfrog's Online Visions

With the rise of multiplayer gaming over the Internet, game developers everywhere are working on ways to create successful multiplayer games. Perhaps no one is working harder, or thinking more carefully, on this topic than Peter Molyneux, head of Britain's renowned Bullfrog.

Now a division of game giant Electronic Arts, Bullfrog is working on a number of Internet-based multiplayer games. In fact, all but one of the company's new titles will be multiplayer. The release of the highly anticipated Dungeon Keeper (see Guided Tour, *PC Entertainment*, February 1996, page 41), for example, will be followed within three months by Dungeon Keeper Internet, Molyneux promises.

Dungeon Keeper Internet will let you play alone to build experience and create dungeons, then upload the latter to the Internet. Opponents can invade your dungeons and battle your creatures in either first-person or strategic mode, says Molyneux, and the game will support up to 64 different dungeons at once.

Dungeon Keeper Internet will let you build dungeons offline, then play through them with opponents on the Net.

Exciting possibilities aside, Molyneux admits to worrying about how multiplayer Internet games will work. Text-based MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) have been running for more than a decade, he points out, but still haven't caught on in a big way.

"You get bullies–it's intimidating," he says. Molyneux likens joining an online game to being the new kid at the playground. It's actually worse, he says, because online players are nameless, faceless, and voiceless. "You end up following this bloody smart-ass around for hours, feeling like it's impossible to ever get to [a certain] level."

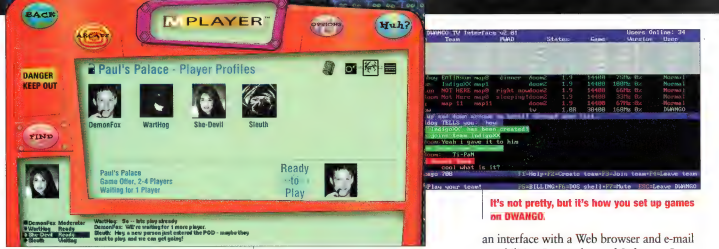
One solution that could help with Internet versions of regular games is to let players practice offline, then join a group game when they feel up to the challenge.

But there are other questions, too. "How do you get [20] people to play for 20 hours without the entire system crashing when someone logs off?" Molyneux's answer to his own question: Let the computer play for them when they're not around. That way, you could rejoin the game with the anticipation of learning what happened while you were gone.

The problem is how to create a computer player sympathetic to the way a person plays. Standard computer players won't work, he explains; the trick is to get players to believe they're playing against a human. "It's dead easy to make [computer players] really, really good," Molyneux says. "It's making them seem natural that's tough."

He should know. Since 1992, Molyneux's been working on behavioral cloning techniques designed to create and modify a computer player to mimic the style of a particular human being. Does it tend to run away from a fight, for example, or blindly charge into danger?

Solving these issues could produce a strange new mix of human and computer intelligence. "It's spooky," Molyneux chuckles. "The game would play all by itself, 24 hours a day, humans or not!" *–Fredric Paul*



Mplayer's interface is designed to make it easy and accessible to enjoy multiplayer online gaming.

It's not pretty, but it's how you set up games on DWANGO.

or SLIP connection to the Internet), these companies will connect you with human opponents and fast action over a phone wire. As DWANGO's Bob Huntly puts it, "We sell competition."

More of an adrenaline rush than text-based RPGs (a la GEnie's Gemstone), and easier to connect and more complex than head-to-head matches via a modern connection, this is automatic, multiplayer gaming, anytime you want to fill Duke Nukem's 3-D combat boots.

Here's the setup for Duke, for example: You log onto TEN, talk to other gamers in special Duke Nukem chat rooms, invite compatible players or accept invitations, and let the action begin.

You're a happy Duke now that you've tossed your pipebombs into the elevator. You step back and wait. Your finger is poised to press the red button in front of you, triggering the bombs. Another Duke, controlled by a fellow human, calls the elevator. Down it goes. You press the button. BOOM! You've turned Jane into hamburger, but you know she's being reincarnated—sitting at her computer in some other time zone—and now she's out for revenge.

You also know Jane's going to fight like hell to get that revenge. And she may do something you never expected, because she's no dumb monster. She may even be as devious and twisted as you are.

Easy Access

"People have very good AI built-in," says Scott Miller, president of Apogee, maker of Duke Nukem. Then he laughs, "Most people, at least."

Although killing a human-controlled character takes more thought than repeatedly exterminating the same monsters in the same spots, setting up a multiplayer deathmatch ought to be as easy as turning on the TV. So XBAND, Mpath's Mplayer, TEN, and DWANGO have promised to provide something close to one-click access to human competition.

You will, if you haven't already, find connection software from the four services on the newest game CDs. The goal is that with one click, your computer will dial in, log on, and show you who is available to talk to and play against. You'll even be able to play multiplayer shareware that you downloaded free.

Of course, there may still be a few bugs in the system. Many clicks I tried this spring produced nothing, for instance. I downloaded DWANGO's DOS software from the service's Web site (**www.DWANGO.com**), then spent a full hour trying to configure and log on. When I finally succeeded, I found DWANGO's chat room empty; there was no one to play.

That'll change. The people who run DWANGO are heavily advertising to attract players to their chat rooms. And the company's not alone: Each online gaming service hopes its software, infrastructure, and customers will make the best games even better over the Internet.

TEN

Of all the gaming services, TEN is the most like an Internet service provider, comprising an interface with a Web browser and e-mail capabilities. Its purchase of Software Creations, a large shareware repository and web innovator, gives TEN an advantage in creating a Web site that makes it easy to find other players. TEN will be bundling its software with games specially optimized for its service—like Duke Nukem 3D and Shadow Warrior—which you can tap into directly or from any "TEN-approved" Internet service provider. To earn this designation, ISPs must commit to creating fast links from their computers to TEN's backbones. TEN will also give subscribers gaming news and host competitions.

With heavy backing from venture capitalists, TEN is believed by many to be the strongest player in the field. As Miller puts it, "TEN has got its act most together." That's why Apogee offers Duke Nukem only on TEN.

Mplayer

While TEN works much like an ISP, Mplayer plans to be more like a Web site, linked to many sites throughout the Net. The service hopes you will click the "Play Now" button on Mplayer screens to automatically launch into multiplayer games. When it launches later this year, the site will measure the speed of your Internet connection, so you'll know which games you can play. In the belief that "the game is the thing," the interface will be kept minimal. "Who thinks

Get Ready to ENGAGE

This September, a joint venture of game developer/distributor Interplay and other investors plans to establish ENGAGE Games Online. Founded by Jeff Liebowitz, who also started the pioneering online gaming service that eventually became The ImagiNation Network (INN), ENGAGE will be available via America Online and Prodigy, as well as the Internet. Apparently, working with the online services simplifies billing and other issues: ENGAGE will be covered by the services' already relatively hefty access fees. Internet pricing has not been set.

Interplay owns the rights to several hot games—from Descent II to Stonekeep—but ENGAGE will also offer games from other companies. To find it, search for ENGAGE on AOL or Prodigy, or head to www.gameson line.com on the Web.

Choosing Your Service

What to look for in an online gaming service:

- Each service should have a free trial period. If it doesn't, don't try it.
- Each Web site should recommend different Internet service providers, or offer you service.
- If the first service you try doesn't work easily, try another, because a no-brainer connection is the only way lots of players will show up.
- Make sure the service provides competition at any given moment.

XBAND will hit the Internet later this year. For now, it's strictly a modem-to-modem connection.

about the phone company when they place a typical call? Nobody," says Mplayer's head of design, Brian Moriarty.

To keep communication among players simple, Mplayer plans to upload small pieces of code to your PC. The company has also secured "prioritized gaming packets," meaning that game information goes ahead of e-mail and anything else over the wires it travels.

Expect more changes as the service evolves, since Mplayer is, as Moriarty puts it, the only service actively pushing for large "socially interactive entertainment experiences," including real-time voice chat.

DWANGO

DWANGO began by bundling its software with id Software's massively popular Doom. By early 1996, the service was a system of local game servers spread across 25 U.S. cities, plus one in Tokyo. To use DWANGO, simply click on the DWANGO icon on your screen and your modem will connect to the server you've designated at setup, where you can chat with other players, hook up, and play.

These matches are not played via the Internet per se, but only between those dialed into the same server. This should change in late '96, when DWANGO plans to link all of its U.S. servers into a national system. Once that happens, DWANGO will be a much easier place to log on to, hang out in, and kick butts on. Still, big draw id Software has since opted to align with XBAND.

XBAND

A reliable, growing concern for Sega and Nintendo systems since November 1994, XBAND is now taking its experience to the PC.

Here's how it currently works: You meet an opponent in an AOL-like environment, look at each other's stats, chat, and agree to play, at which point your modem automatically dials the other person's phone number. It works. It's fast action. Only two can play, but locally, it's free.

Though XBAND plans to take its service to the Internet, the company's executive vice president of products, Konstantin Othmer, worries there may still be "too much goo" between players on the Net. To keep the data flowing, the service has hired private wires that it claims will guarantee excellent gaming from any Internet service.

Still, you may want to stick with XBAND and your local phone company for your fun. That's especially true if you like fighting games, which may never be playable over the Internet due to speed constraints.

May the Best Games Win

Right now, everyone wants to get games on the Net, and there are sure to be more deals announced, more games going online, and even more Net gaming services joining the fray. For Windows 95, Microsoft's upgrades to its DirectPlay technology (see news story, page 19) are designed to make the process easier, further expanding what many in the industry describe as the next frontier.

For the moment, though, how much fun you'll have playing online depends on whose sandbox you play in.

Yes, computers still make it possible to have fun on your own, but this could be the year you decide stupid monsters are no longer much fun to kill—not after you've tasted virtual human blood. ■

Jeffrey Goldsmith (wordz@sirius.com) writes fiction, designs games, and works as a journalist.

Who's Got What

XBAND
www.xband.com
408-777-1500
Price not available
GAMES: Command & Conquer, Diablo, Doom II, Hardball 5, Hexen, Locus, MechWarrior 2, Pax Imperia II, SimCity 2000, Super Street Fighter II, The Ultimate Doom, Warcraft II

Mplayer
www.mplayer.com
408-342-8800
Approximately $12.50/hour
GAMES: Chaos Overlords, SimCity, Terminal Velocity, Titchaven

TEN
www.ten.net
800-804-0836
$7.50/month, credited toward usage fees of $2.50/hour using a TEN access number or $1.25/hour using another Internet connection. Flat-rate plans under consideration.
GAMES: *Big Red Racing, *Blood, CivNet, *Deadly Games, *Duke Nukem 3D, *Falcon 4.0, Magic: The Gathering, Masters of Orion II, *Shadow Warrior, SimCity, Space Traders: 2525, Terminal Velocity, Top Gun, Total Mayhem, Warcraft II, World Circuit II–1995
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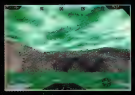
DWANGO
www.DWANGO.com
713-467-0405
$795/month, including five free hours. Additional time: $19.95 for 10 hours, $34.95 for 20 hours, or $59.95 for 40 hours. Thirty minutes free for new members. Lobby time is free.
GAMES: Doom, Doom II, The Ultimate Doom, Heretic, Hexen, Terminal Velocity, Witchaven, TekWar, MechWarrior 2

Westwood Studios
www.westwood.com
800-874-4607
Free
GAMES: Monopoly

Time To Kick Ass



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– COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

STARRING MICHAEL DORN

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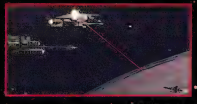

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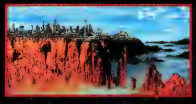

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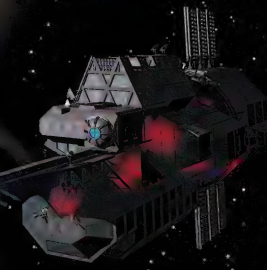

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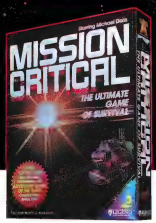

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GUIDED TOUR

Diab

By Steve Klett

Now you know: Demon corpses that are reanimated and given the ability to cast powerful magic are called Bone Demons.

The Flamewall spell creates an instant barbecue out of nearby enemies.

You won't have to take on Diablo's minions all by your lonesome.

Step inside a new kind of RPG from the makers of Warcraft II.

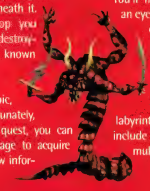
Magistrates are Diablo's most trusted advisors—and the most powerful magic wielders in the game.

The epic struggle between Orcs and Humans in Blizzard's Warcraft II strategy game took the world of computer gaming by storm. Not content to rest on its laurels, the company now hopes to revitalize role-playing games with Diablo.

That might not be as hard as you think. Mixing traditional computer role-playing games, pen-and-paper RPGs, and a Crusader: No Remorse look, Diablo is a game unlike any you've ever played before.

Here's the story: As the game begins, you are transported to a medieval village plagued by an unknown evil and shrouded in darkness. There you discover that your family has been murdered and the town decimated. The few survivors speak fearfully of the source of the destruction: a desecrated temple at the edge of town. Bent on vengeance, you enter the temple and wander the dark passageways of the vast labyrinth beneath it. Nothing will stop you from finding and destroying its evil lord, known only as Diablo.

If you're a bit claustrophobic, don't worry. Fortunately, throughout your quest, you can return to the village to acquire new skills and new information, improve your fighting and spellcasting abilities, trade items you find below ground, and purchase more powerful weapons.



The four-armed serpant Magi can attack with two swords while casting spells.

You play the Windows 95–native game from a three-quarter overhead view, rendered in stunning Super VGA reminiscent of Crusader: No Remorse. The graphics are designed to overwhelm your senses and draw you into Diablo's world. At the same time, the isometric perspective lets you see physical changes in your character as you pick up new weapons, armor, and magical items.

Other RPGs, such as Betrayal At Krondor, may offer similar playing perspectives, but Diablo ups the ante with an intriguing new multiplayer element. At least four players (and perhaps as many as eight) will be able to explore Diablo's passageways at a time.

While the focus will be on working together to solve the various puzzles and kill a host of evil creatures, you may also have to compete with your "friends" for special items and weapons. You'll have to keep an eye out, too, because fellow players can quite literally stab you in the back. Even better, players will be able to go off and explore on their own—even on different levels of the labyrinth. (Like Warcraft II, Diablo will include a "spawning" feature that lets multiple players share a single copy of the game.)

The Black Knights are Diablo's demonic swordsmen. They are immune to most forms of magic.

You can play as a fighter, an archer, or a wizard—each with its typical strengths and weaknesses. Fortunately, being a fighter won't stop you from casting the odd spell or using that awesome magic item you find; you just won't be able to use magic quite as well as a wizard. In classic RPG style, you can save characters to use in multiple games, becoming increasing powerful along the way.

Fighting takes place in real time, a switch from the turn-based combat schemes found in most RPGs. The result is not only a more satiating visual feast, but also more compelling game play. You've got to think smart, but you've also got to think on your feet.

Finally, while most RPGs are good for only one playthrough, Diablo features a random level-generator that changes the design of the labyrinth—and the location of all its items—each time you play a new game. That should give it an unprecedented level of replayability.

For a closer look at a new kind of RPG, climb aboard our Guided Tour. You'll meet some of the more than 100 monsters that inhabit Diablo's halls, and get a peek at a few of the miniquests scattered throughout the game. Diablo should hit shelves by the end of June. Look for it—if you dare. (Blizzard; 800-953-7669, Win 95; street price $50)

SEE MORE Online.
http://www.pcgamesmag.com

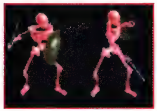
GUIDED TOUR

Goat Demons form the bulk of Diablo's army. Some of these powerful humanoids attack from a distance with bows; others brandish nasty spiked maces.

Miniquest: The Bone Chamber

Careful snooping will uncover a mysterious book on a pedestal. The tome reveals the location of a mythic "nova" spell. Unfortunately for you, the secret of the spell lies in another book beyond The Bone Chamber–a room packed with blood-thirsty demons. Fight your way through to the book, and you will learn how to generate a wall of flame that consumes everything in its path.

Skeletons are fairly smart but shatter easily. Most carry axes, but some also wield bows with deadly aim.



Smarter and stronger than your average skeleton, Skeleton Captains inspire their brethren to fight more fiercely. Kill them first.

Miniquest: The Butcher

Do enough exploring and you'll encounter The Butcher's Lair . In this blood-soaked chamber, you'll do battle with a buffed-up Overlord Demon armed with a nasty cleaver. Slay him and the cleaver is yours. This meat ax does double damage to anything it hits.

Physically, Mega-Demons are the strongest creatures in the game. Watch out for their flaming breath.

The Succubus is a seductive she-devil with a nasty surprise.

The brutish Overlord demons keep lesser demons in line. They're strong, but slow.

In addition to a wizard, you can wander Diablo's lair as an archer or knight.

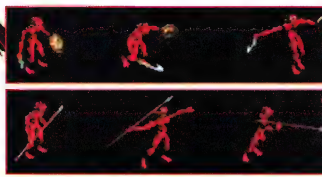
The four-legged Acid Beast hocks loogies that eat through armor, flesh, and bone.

Watch out for the terrifying charge of these rhinoceroslike demons.

Magma Demons are magically animated lava monsters that can toss chunks of themselves to create deadly explosions.

Miniquest: The Ring of Sight

While visiting the town's General Store, you learn that a caravan carrying treasure for the king has been ambushed and a piece of a meteoric metal, rumored to have magical properties, has been stolen. Find the metal, and the town blacksmith will fashion you a ring with the power of night vision.



The Fallen are the weakest demons you'll fight. They act tough in packs but scatter when frightened. The Fallen armed with scimitars and shields are tougher than those with spears.

Miniquest: The Halls of the Skeleton King

Visit the Town Tavern enough times and the proprietor will tell you the tale of the Skeleton King. Evidently, Diablo has resurrected an ancient king who is responsible for generating all of those pesky skeleton warriors you keep bumping into. You are asked to slay this king, and when you accept, a secret door opens in the labyrinth that gives you access to his domain.

If you manage to kill the formidable ruler (hint: don't try it as a low-level character; beef yourself up first), you will reap the following rewards:

(1) A powerful skeleton-bashing mace.

(2) No new skeletons will be generated to replace those you kill.

Storm Lords are giant demons capable of hurling deadly lightning bolts. They are extremely dangerous in close combat.

PREVIEW!

Noir

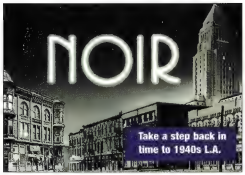
By Bill Meyer

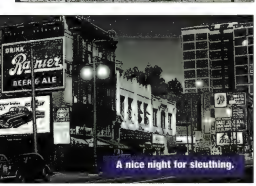
Despite its black-and-white graphics, Noir is filled with vibrant visuals.

Many games have borrowed from film noir to evoke the slimy underbelly of urban life. Few, though, have really done their source material justice. Despite their beautiful, back-stabbing divas and cold-hearted Joes, digital knockoffs like Who Shot Johnny Rock? and Angel Devoid usually end up as pale parodies of the original films done up in colorful computer graphics.

Judging from what we've seen, Cyberdreams aims to break the mold. This fall, the company will pay true homage to a classic genre with the hard-edged suspense thriller Noir. The game will revive not only the seedy backstreets of 1940s Los Angeles, but also the moody, black-and-white lighting that gave the original movies their dark glamour.

This first-person thriller casts you as the colleague of Jack Slayton, a private-eye who, along with torch singer Joan La Fontaine, disappeared under questionable circumstances. To find the missing pair, you must reopen six of Slayton's current files, which include an assortment of bizarre murder and missing-person cases. True to the gritty genre, you will do all of your snooping in the heat of night.





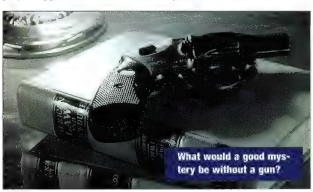
On the trail, you'll travel throughout L.A., interacting with all walks of life. One of the first people you'll meet is Agnes Simon, the bitter, aging starlet who hired Slayton to find her missing pooch, the famous Wo-Tan the Wonder Dog. You'll also rub elbows with millionaire playboy Charles Winthrop to solve the mysterious death of his prize pony, Pegasus, who was enjoying a winning streak at Santa Anita before an untimely demise. You might choose to investigate a spy ring at the historic Bradbury building, or delve into the opium dens of L.A.'s Chinese underworld. Before you know it, your snooping for dogs, rare books, war plans, and Slayton, among other things, could lead you to an international crime ring with connections to the Third Reich.

To make sure the 18 classic locations—from Union Station to the Santa Anita Racetrack to the Los Angeles Piers—look authentic, writer/director Jeff Blyth, producer Dave Mullich, and developer Three-Space filmed on location at some 20 landmarks. Painstaking doctoring of existing exterior and interior locations by Hollywood set-dressers and the use of archival film and photographs in the game environments have removed all traces of modern life.

Yet, despite the risky choice of black-and-white graphics, these environments are far from dreary. Ironically, the game's noirish nightscapes were photographed in color during the day. After developing and digitizing them, Three-Space carefully reduced the images to black-and-white, then tweaked them with software to create vibrant nighttime environments marked by distinct contrasts.

Amid this retro-splendor, you can expect pretty standard adventure-game play. Solving each case will depend largely on your gaining information from a dozen or so characters and logging it in your journal. Once a contact tips you off to a new place, you're off to explore it, spying on other characters and interrogating new suspects via pithy full-motion-video sequences. Along the way, you'll pick up a few items to permanently add to your inventory, such as spare change to call a helpful informant for advice.

Noir's vintage look and feel are sure to please genre enthusiasts. With any luck, this stylish creation will deliver enough game play to appeal to veteran adventure gamers as well.



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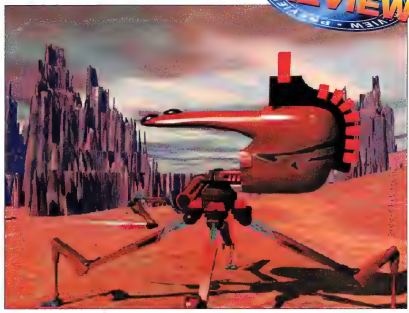
PREVIEW!

RAMA

By Steve Klett

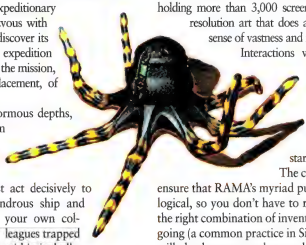


The *RAMA* spacecraft is so vast that this entire environment—mountains, sky, and everything else—is inside.

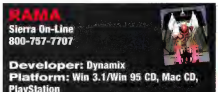
It's certainly no surprise that the game Sierra is billing as its biggest of the year is an adventure game. What the product's based on and who's developing it, though, are a bit more unusual.

RAMA is Dynamix's first adventure game, and thus stands out from the company's previous efforts—mostly action/simulation titles such as the EarthSiege series, the A-10 Tank Killer series, and Red Baron. Dynamix is doing its best to charge into the new genre by basing its game on Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee's popular sci-fi series *RAMA*, which should help give the game a strong, compelling story.

RAMA is set 200 years in the future, when a gigantic cylindrical starship dubbed *RAMA* arrives in our solar system from unknown origins. Earth sends an expeditionary squad of 12 astronauts to rendezvous with *RAMA*, enter its dark core, and discover its purpose. When the leader of the expedition suddenly dies in the early stages of the mission, a replacement is sent. That replacement, of course, is you.



As you explore the ship's enormous depths, you'll encounter a variety of alien races—some of them dangerous, some of them not. You'll learn that *RAMA* is threatened with destruction, and you must act decisively to save both this mysterious, wondrous ship and your own colleagues trapped within its hull.



You will navigate RAMA's 3-D graphical environment via a step-based, first-person perspective similar to Myst. If our early look at the game is any indication, RAMA's technical merits will equal those of the story. The game will ship on 3 discs holding more than 3,000 screens of exquisitely rendered, high-resolution art that does a remarkable job of conveying a sense of vastness and foreboding.

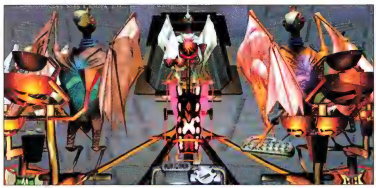
Interactions with alien races are portrayed through sharp, smooth animated video sequences that mesh seamlessly with the background art. Dynamix is putting a lot of effort into making it difficult to notice when video sequences start and end, and it shows.

The company's also working hard to ensure that RAMA's myriad puzzles are both challenging and logical, so you don't have to resort to trial and error to find the right combination of inventory items or lever pulls to keep going (a common practice in Sierra adventure games). Puzzles will also be structured around the cultures of particular alien races, so careful observation of the species' rules and customs will be key.

Using Sierra's Web site, Sierra and Dynamix plan to add context-sensitive help that'll be accessible from within the game. Better yet, you'll receive help based specifically on where you are in the game.

RAMA fans will also be happy to know that Arthur C. Clarke appears in the prologue, death scenes, and finale, narrates the introduction, and provides hints throughout the estimated 60-hour-plus game.

Sierra's RAMA is based on the novel *RAMA II*, the second of four *RAMA* books currently available. The series spans 22 years of publication and has sold more than 7 million copies in 20 countries.



You'll need to learn the customs of each alien species.

Sierra's confidence in the product runs so deep that it's already begun work on RAMA II, and there are tentative plans for RAMA III, IV, and V. In the meantime, look for RAMA to travel to a store near you in October.

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He's big. He's BAD. And he's red.

PREVIEW!

Crusader: No Regret

By Steve Klett

With a fresh perspective, sharp Super VGA graphics, cool death scenes, and more story than your average action game, Origin's Crusader: No Remorse was an instant hit. And what does Origin do when it's got a hit on its hands? It makes a sequel, of course. So prepare yourself for Crusader: No Regret, which should hit a store near you late this summer.

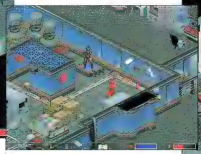
Crusader producer Tony Zurovec cautions that No Regret, based on No Remorse's game engine, will not be a full-blown sequel—in fact, he actually calls it Crusader 1.5. A "real" sequel with an all-new engine is in the works for 1997, and is currently titled Crusader: No Mercy. (Sounds like good fodder for a series of Steven Seagal movies, doesn't it?)

Great pyrotechnics ensure that No Regret's video sequences are as action-packed as its game play.

Whatever you call it, No Regret is great news for Crusader fans, since it will provide 10 brand-new mayhem-packed levels filled with even more eye candy, character development, and story than the original game. To bring you the scoop, *PC Games* hopped down to Dallas to visit the set where the game's video footage was being shot.

In No Remorse, you played the part of Silencer, a former member of an elite military group belonging to the evil World Economic Consortium (WEC), led by the maniacal Commissioner Nathaniel Draygan. As the game opened, you realized that you'd been playing for the wrong team, so you joined the rebel cause to try to redeem yourself. Clad in bright-red armor and armed to the teeth, you battled your way through 15 levels, blew up a space station, and became a major thorn in Draygan's side. At the end of the game, you escaped in a rescue pod with the overly confident Draygan doing his best imitation of Snoopy's "I'll get you, Red Baron."

Subtle differences such as curved walls will enhance Crusader's already impressive playing environment.



Blast your way through 10 massive new levels.

No Regret will also feature textured walls.

Crusader: No Regret
Electronic Arts
800-245-4525

Developer: Origin Systems
Platform: DOS CD
Available: August

No Regret picks up exactly where No Remorse left off, with Silencer's pod captured and taken to a base on the moon. Of course, being Silencer, you manage to steal a weapon, kill your guards, and begin kicking the ass of Draygan's minions all over again. Before all is said and done, you and Draygan himself will exchange pleasantries.

If No Remorse had a weakness, it was that its story was not tightly woven into the game. Video clips advanced the plot, but mostly at the beginning or ending of a mission. This time around, you'll get a number of video messages during game play that'll provide you with vital information about your current mission and the game's plot.

Of course, there will also be several new enemies to fight, including the WEC's elite Space Marines and mechs that morph from seemingly innocent objects like a vending machine into instant death if you're not careful.

No Regret's graphics will feature a number of subtle improvements designed to further enrich Crusader's isometric playing environment. For example, you'll see curved walls in corridors, and walls and objects will now be texture-mapped instead of monochromatic.

While maybe not quite a full sequel, No Regret will go far beyond your average add-on disc—and that's welcome news for Silencers everywhere.

Produced by
InterWeave Entertainment

Dr. Elizabeth Duran

The colleague and lover of the late Dr. Everett Cussler, this beautiful and brilliant scientist has it all. Unfortunately, that's why somebody wants her dead.

Peter Cussler

Everett's scheming failure of a son. His resentment toward Elizabeth knows no bounds.

Rachel Cussler

Everett's daughter and protégé, not to mention a sociopath with a taste for designer aphrodisiacs.

Candace Cussler

Driven to the brink by her husband Peter's impotence. Her desperate hunger for passion leads her to the bed of another.

Sylvio Donato

A longtime friend and financial advisor to the Cussler family. His intentions are not entirely honorable.

Colin Meyers

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Not your father's Zork

Zork Nemesis

By Shane Mooney

The world of Zork is almost as old as the PC itself, and each new generation of machines and owners brings a new generation of Zork games.

When it was in its text-based infancy, Zork helped define our ideas of computer games. So much so that even today—in a gaming world dressed up with '80s TV stars and Super VGA graphics—many a jaded adventurer longs for a game as rich and complex as the original Zork.

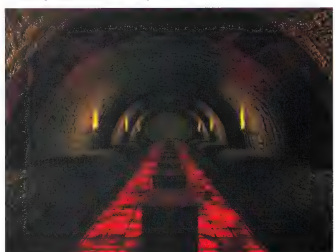
When Zork hit adolescence as Return to Zork, it was one of the first games to successfully mix full-motion video, beautifully rendered screens, and enjoyable game play. Now the series has grown into adulthood as Zork Nemesis. (For more information, see Guided Tour, *PC Entertainment*, March 1996, page 38.)

This three-disc set takes all the elements that make a great adventure game and pulls them into one compelling package. In fact, this product is so engrossing that it may spoil you for all the other so-called adventure games on the market.

When Nemesis begins, you're trapped inside a courtyard in front of a huge temple. Upon closer inspection of a hidden room, a ghostly figure beckons you to help those locked inside the temple—a place whose dark keeper is an unseen, bellowing voice known only as Nemesis.

You learn that four alchemists—representing the elements Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water—have been trapped by the Nemesis. Hidden deep within the vast temple are puzzles and obstacles related to each alchemist. By solving them, you will help the

Solve the four elemental puzzles and you'll get a brass globe. Place it in the center of the "solar system" to travel to other places where you'll encounter more puzzles.



Explore every nook and cranny. And take your time—the journey is Nemesis' reward.

RECOMMENDED PC GAMES

Zork Nemesis
Activision
800-477-3650

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0 or Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	A

The latest incarnation of Zork once again redefines a top-notch adventure game.

This guy could use some sun—must be one of the programmers.

The Air Apparent: The air alchemist and her companions have been trapped by the Nemesis.

alchemists regain, more or less, their freedom.

You'll then be able to whisk to other places and landscapes riddled with even more enigmatic riddles—all in the hope of piecing together the mystery behind the Nemesis, and the alchemists' grand plan. Be careful who you trust: Not everyone is as they seem, and the evil you'll confront may not be what you expect.

A brilliant example of what a graphic adventure game should be, Nemesis is chock full of fantastic, 3-D–rendered environments. They're easily as glorious as what your imagination may have conjured when playing the text-based versions.

Unlike most Myst clones, Zork allows 360-degree panning: By simply moving your mouse left or right you can smoothly turn all the way around to see everything. The effect is surprisingly Doom-like, only with the addition of high-resolution graphics. To go forward you still need to click that familiar arrow and flip to the next screen, but the movement is so fluid—from the panning to the animated movies that play while you travel—that my stomach let me know that it thought we really were in motion.

The only downside to all these wonderful visuals is that they fill only three-quarters of the screen, which may be a disappointment for people with small monitors. But considering the limitations of today's computing power, I'll take smooth panning over full-screen pictures any day.

Supplementing the great graphics are wonderful 3-D sound and music. The eerie, Enya-esque mood music sets the stage perfectly, as does the ambient crackling of thunder and other sounds that'll have you looking over your shoulder. The interface couldn't be simpler: You merely point the arrow in the direction you want to go, and go. Whenever you come across something you need to interact with, the icon changes accordingly.

Naturally, the thing that makes a game great isn't pretty pictures or cool sounds, but game play. Here, too, Zork Nemesis excels. As difficult as it's become for an adventure game to come up with fresh and challenging puzzles, this one has them in droves.

I'm no stranger to adventure games, but it took me quite a while to get past the first puzzle. Once I'd figured it out, though, I did a "I coulda had a V-8" head slap and thought, "Of course!" The solution seemed obvious once I put the clues together.

Zork veterans might remember the ridiculously abstruse puzzles in Return to Zork. Players often had to make desperate stabs in the dark before happening upon the right answer. Though the puzzles in Zork Nemesis are by no means child's play, if you're observant enough, you have all the tools you need to solve them. If you still find yourself stuck, there's a built-in hint system that can be used at certain points to keep you moving forward.

And you won't want to stop, because here, the journey is the reward. As the game progresses, you begin to develop a better understanding of what is really going on. Without giving too much away, you must ultimately decide what course you want the game to take based on where your sympathies lie. The ending you receive depends on the choices you made.

Yes, there are a few minor things that aren't exactly perfect. The acting isn't going to win any Oscars, and if you're expecting the light-heartedness that permeated Return to Zork, you're in for a surprise. Nemesis' subject matter is heavy, and the entire game reflects that seriousness. But if you're serious about your adventure games, you'll see Zork Nemesis as a full-grown title rivaling the best the genre has to offer.

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Stunning visuals are everywhere you look.

TIPS

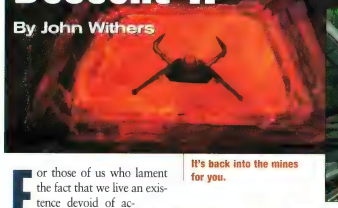
• Do a lot of looking and reading. Most of the puzzles' solutions can be found in something you read in another room. • To get into the temple you need to hold down the mouse button and flip the door's moon-shaped knocker up so that it's touching the sun. • If you don't have great hearing, solving the Flute/Fountain Puzzle can be a real problem. Going from left to right on the fountain, you need to click on fountains 1, 4, and 5 in order. • To solve the hourglass chair puzzle, you must sit in it and then spin completely around to the left two times. Pick up the saw in the rear window, get back in the chair, and spin to the left three more times. Now cut the icicle with the saw, get back in the chair and spin to the right two times. Step forward and click on the water in the bowl.

Not for the queasy

Descent II

By John Withers

PLAY the Demo on the disc



It's back into the mines for you.

Beware: The enemy 'bots are smarter this time around.

For those of us who lament the fact that we live an existence devoid of action, Descent II brings back our favorite mine-running mayhem. Once again, be ready to blow the crap out of everything that moves.

In case you've been living in a mine shaft, here's the scenario: The Descent games cast you as a mercenary in a small spacecraft whose job is to clear out space-based mining complexes filled with robots gone berserk. Scattered conveniently around the mines are various weapons and equipment that fit onto your ship, giving you more equipment to rain destruction on the forces of robo-evil. Played via a fluid first-person perspective, Descent's action-packed, 360-degree game play is both dizzying and addictive.

Improved graphics make it easier to discern enemy types from longer distances.

Descent II
Interplay
800-969-4263

Developer: Parallax
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/50, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B+

This solid sequel should provide action gamers with hours of challenging, pulse-pounding play.

Descent II picks up right where the original left off. Interplay definitely took the evolutionary route when updating this best-selling franchise. Anyone who has played Descent can climb right into the cockpit and take off without so much as glancing at the manual.

While the sequel lacks any earthshaking new modifications, the added features are well-thought-out, and they make the game more interesting. Plus you get 30 new action-packed levels set in six different worlds.

Descent's most significant improvement is the Guide-Bot. This handy little critter helps lead you through the mines, showing you the location of essential keys and powerups. All in all, it's an extremely useful feature, as it's very easy to become disoriented in the mazelike mines.

But for the one good Guide-Bot, Descent II claims a slew of new nasties. The Thief-Bot presents the most annoying new addition, stealing your weapons and powerups and presenting an incredibly elusive target.

Descent II also boasts a host of new accessories. Some of the handiest include an all-map powerup that allows you to see an entire level without having to actually fly around to locate everything; a headlight powerup, which illuminates those dark corridors; and an energy-to-shield converter that will take surplus energy and convert it straight to shield points. You also get ten new weapons, including Level 6 lasers and the EarthShaker Missile. And there's a rockin' new soundtrack by Type O Negative and Ogre of Skinny Puppy.

Another strong point is the improved robots' artificial intelligence. Most of the new 'bots are smart enough to dodge your fire or hide and snipe at you from behind corners, making them much more difficult to kill. Interplay has also added a new 640-by-480 graphics option that offers crisper action this time around, and enables you to actually see what you're firing at from long distances.

While not a revolutionary change in the original engine, Descent II is a solid extension of the Descent line. The 30 new levels are challenging and provide a good run for your money. But most importantly, this sequel is every bit as vertigo-inducing as its forebear. Climb aboard—if you dare.

TIPS

- **You can download a playable demo of Descent II from Interplay's Web site at http://www.interplay.com.**
- **Slide, Slide, Slide**
- **Check out the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) list at http://www.primenet.com/~dcuigid/faq/ for a host of tips, strategies, and information tidbits.**
- **Setting your left screen to Rear View can help you find robots sneaking up on you.**
- **Your Guide-Bot is great, but his constantly going in and out of doors to try to guide you will let baddies take shots at you. When going through a door, tell the Guide-Bot to get away from you until you are done with the killing.**

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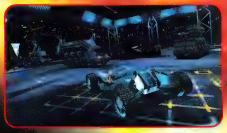

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CYBERIA 2
<<RESURRECTION>>

Who'll save Gotham City?

Batman Forever

Hey, cool—another superhero game! Those of you disappointed by Venom/Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety are probably counting your money already, hoping this time Acclaim got it right. And who'd blame you? I mean, how could a game with a character as fascinating as Batman be anything but fun?

Well, here's one way: Dilute some fairly good game play with boring graphics and the inability to save games. For a game based on a visual extravaganza, Batman Forever is surprisingly pared-down—almost the complete opposite of the film it's based on.

Fans of *Batman Forever* will be glad to know that story-wise, at least, the game stays pretty faithful to the recent movie. As either Batman or Robin—or both, if you play with a friend—you must hunt arch-villains Two-Face and the Riddler through eight levels, including Arkham Asylum, the Gotham City Bank, and Wayne Manor. Your ultimate goal: Make it to Claw Island for a final showdown with the evil pair.

Even Batman and Robin do some clownin' around.

Naturally, the bad guys are backed by an unending supply of inmates, thugs, and assassins, giving our heroes plenty of people to pummel. In one of the game's nicer touches, the Dynamic Duo can supplement their standard kicks and punches with selections from a formidable array of weapons—smoke pellets, bat bolas, wrist rivets, and more. Add them to your uppercuts and roundhouses, and you've got some devastating combinations. If only the visuals were as interesting. Batman Forever's sparse black scenes and repetitive backgrounds will leave you claustrophobic, nearly gasping for stimuli.

In the end, it all comes down to the fighting. With a decent number of moves, your nifty weapons, and a training level that lets you practice, it holds up pretty well. There's just one problem: With nothing else to hold your attention, and no passwords or save-game feature, finishing the game may be more than even Batman can endure.

—*Corey Cohen*

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All products pictured here are compatible with MS-DOS and Windows 95. Specific Windows 95 drivers are under development for the F-16 Combatstick, Virtual Pilot Pro, CH Throttle, and Pro Throttle to make them fully compatible.

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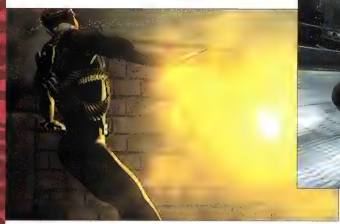
CH PRODUCTS

More action, less adventure

Cyberia²: Resurrection

By Peter Olafson



Like the original game, Cyberia² is packed with excellent animation.

Nice scenery—too bad you won't have time to stop and look around.

There are many ugly, painful ways for Zak to meet his maker.

I'm of mixed minds about Cyberia²: Resurrection. Just when I'm convinced that it's been claimed by the sophomore jinx, it goes and does something that knocks my socks off and tickles my feet. What gives?

Xatrix's original Cyberia (published in 1994 by Interplay) was a bright star in a sky of Rebel Assault–style shoot-'em-ups. It added an adventure to the pastiche of action sequences, with the happy result that you never felt like you were just pulling a trigger.

Now, two years later, Zak is back—thawed out from cryogenic sleep. A scientist is using samples of the Cyberia hero's tissue, infected in the original game, in a plot to wipe out the rebel underground. Zak has to reach the Research Mines and use his blood to develop an antidote, or all mankind could be yadda-yadda-yadda. You know the drill.

You know this drill, too. The basic format hasn't changed: Cyberia² is a two-disc collection of bite-size action sequences broken up with cut-scene animations that advance the story (or explain your early death) and the odd exploration segment. You get the same convenient save-game feature that saves a photo of the last arcade sequence you finished, making it easy to pick up right where you left off.

Unfortunately, Cyberia² doesn't start off all that impressively. One of the first real differences from the original is that you've lost the ability to set the difficulty level for the puzzles at the outset. Oh, and the puzzles seem to be missing, too. Sure, you can still interact with objects and push buttons—the elevator at the Free World Alliance HQ, for instance, is controlled by a game of Simon. But overall, Cyberia² seems a cut-and-dried action game.

Moreover, the shoot-'em-up segments seem simpler, less varied, and reminiscent of such games as Starblade and Wetlands: rail-guided 3-D shooting galleries with high-octane explosions.

In Cyberia², you don't have to go hunting for enemies—they're all in your pre-determined path—and they do love to blow up for you.

Just when I was heartily sick of gas-fired explosions, Cyberia² messed with my socks: Zak and his colleague arrive at the FWA HQ. Zak's mission is to make it to the computer without getting shot (sometimes it's not when you shoot, but where you walk) and extract what information he can. An airy 3-D tile-shooting sequence leads to a Burn Cycle–like dash in and out of virtual databases, each with an elaborate 3-D animation and voiceover.

I was so entranced that I almost forgot this wasn't exactly Mr. Interactivity. Who cares? It was only later that I discovered that the amount of information accessible is determined by how many tiles you shoot on the way in. Forget what I said about the puzzles. Maybe action can *be* adventure. The socks came off again, and I'm still playing just waiting for the next tickle.

Cyberia²
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

Developer: Xatrix Entertainment
Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/50, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 3.1 or Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $49.95–$59.95

GAME PLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B

Disappointingly typical rail-shooting segments are saved by a clever mix of action and adventure.

TIPS

- **In the FWA HQ, turn right, then right again, and walk down the right side of the hall. Switch to the left when under the first underpass and back to the right under the second. That way, the guards on the walkway above can't see you.**
- **Once you reach the second level, don't wander too much: It's easy to get killed. Just go straight to the elevators at the end of the walkway.**
- **To see everything the FWA computer has to offer, shoot every red tile you see on your way in. If you miss something important, you'll know.**

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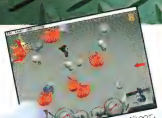

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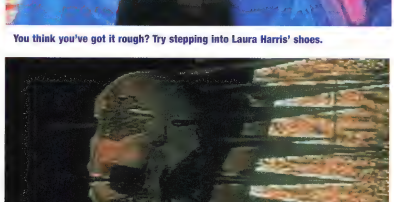
Unintentionally frightful

D

By Shane Mooney

This is Laura's response when she was told the game has no save feature.

You think you've got it rough? Try stepping into Laura Harris' shoes.

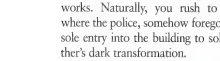


Open the wrong door and you're shishkabob.

What do you get when you cross David Lynch with some serious hallucinogens? Well, you might end up with something that looks a lot like D, a unique interactive horror movie from Acclaim. Unlike the batch of recent games using video clips to create an interactive movie feel, D brings the movie atmosphere to life through three-dimensional animation.

In D, you play the role of Laura Harris, the daughter of a doctor who's gone postal and taken hostages in the hospital where he works. Naturally, you rush to the scene, where the police, somehow foregoing common sense, allow you sole entry into the building to solve the riddle behind your father's dark transformation.

Soon after you enter, you are sucked into some sort of extra-dimensional portal that puts you inside a world created from your father's mind. True to gothic horror conventions, you've now become a woman wandering the rooms of a spooky mansion, encountering the obligatory mutilated cadaver and the seemingly impassable booby traps. You must survive the house's many horrors and discover the secret that is controlling your father before he completely loses what sanity he had, leaving you trapped forever in this killer head trip.



D
Acclaim
516-656-5000

Developer: Warp
Platform: DOS CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	C-

Despite some decent game play, a two-hour time limit with no save-game feature makes D an unintended fright.

If you've ever played games like Cyberia or Creature Shock, you'll be somewhat familiar with the look of D's 3-D graphics. You control Laura mostly from a first-person perspective using the invisible interface of your computer's cursor keys. At certain junctures you decide whether you want her to go forward or back, look at something more closely, or open a door. As you go about your quest, you gather an inventory of objects that will help you solve the puzzles. All pretty much standard procedure.

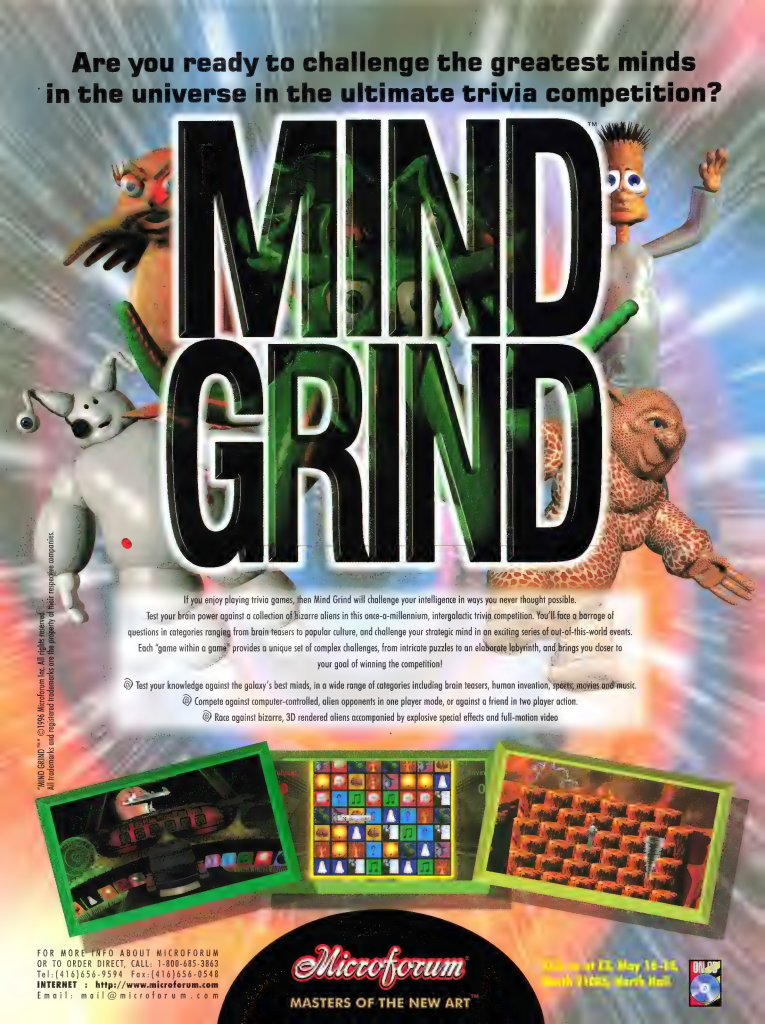
But two things distinguish D from your usual adventure-gaming fare. One is the graphics, which consist of high-resolution, 3-D renderings at all times. This naturally makes the game less interactive than, say, Doom, though you have far more freedom of movement than you do in most interactive movies. The other difference is the game's time limit. You have just two hours to get through this two-disc set—and there's no save-game feature.

If you don't complete your quest in time, you lose: The game ends and you have to start all over! Acclaim defends this feature by comparing D to an actual movie, something you can't walk out on and expect to wait for you. I'd argue that if you go to the theater and buy a horse bucket–sized popcorn and cola syrup for a double sawbuck, you still won't have spent anywhere near the $50-plus the company is asking for D.

As if that weren't enough, the story just isn't very scary—it's more like a tame *X-Files* than *The Exorcist*. But horror mavens looking for a decent adventure game with a few puzzles and a little animated violence may very well be D-lighted with D.

TIPS

- The beetlelike insects have profound significance. Watch for them.
- On the lever cabinet puzzle, remember that the second counter rolls back by the quantity of the first number.
- To solve the animal figurine puzzle, take a closer look at the picture of the girl on the wall.
- In the final confrontation, remember that you still have the gun.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Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—Harbinger

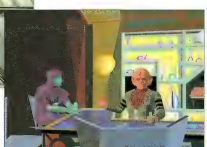
By Corey Cohen

What's the link between the Scythians and the drones?

I have to admit, I feel a bit sorry for *Deep Space Nine*.

If you're into sci-fi, you probably know that for the last couple of years, *DS9*'s faced the equivalent of a Starfleet court martial. Hit by declining ratings, canceled toy contracts, and comparisons with the beloved *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, its creators have struggled to please core fans while attracting a wider audience. It hasn't been easy.

There's no substitute for a good phaser.



He may look friendly, but Quark'll do anything for a little latinum.

With the release of the Deep Space Nine—Harbinger adventure game, though, the franchise seems set to nab an even pickier market: computer gamers. On the heels of Judgment Rites, A Final Unity, and other *Trek* games, Viacom New Media's latest title packages the show's best elements in an intriguing new first-person adventure.

Like the best *Trek* episodes, Harbinger grabs you from the beginning. As Federation envoy Bannik, you're returning from galactic peace talks when alien drones suddenly attack your shuttle. Shields down, engines crippled, you barely make it through the wormhole to the safety of DS9.

Back on the station, you find the trouble's just beginning: An army of drones is preparing to strike, and your colleague, Ambassador Karrig, has been murdered. Are the events related? Who's involved? How can you save the station? Now that you're acting ambassador, it's up to you to find out.

Good thing you're among Starfleet's finest: the forceful Captain Sisko; the determined Major Kira; Odo, the brooding shapeshifter; science officer Dax; and Quark, the resident Ferengi troublemaker. Just as the *Next Gen* crew did in Spectrum HoloByte's A Final Unity, *DS9*'s TV actors lend their voices to their animated likenesses. Harbinger's rendered characters don't move much—they're limited to small motions and opening mouths—but the actors' excellent voiceovers give them the feel of full-motion video.

You'll spend the first half of the game wandering select portions of the station, trying to learn more about Karrig's murder and the alien drones. *DS9*'s interior, rendered in clean Super VGA graphics, looks great—an authentic re-creation of the show's sets. Ops, the Promenades, the bar—they're all here. Even the sounds are right: the hum of the turbolifts, the opening of doors, the cry of phaser fire, the whir of the transporter.

Harbinger's arcade sequences, scattered throughout the game, are just as compelling. These simple shoot-'em-ups let you fly your shuttle into the heart of the drone fleet, storming their stronghold before more drones are launched. When one of these missions fails, you're trapped inside the machines' launch site, and the latter half of the game begins.

It's only here, where Harbinger drifts furthest from *DS9*'s main characters, that the game might be criticized. In an attempt to find the drones' secret, players roam a maze of beams, machines, and holograms. Again, the environments are beautiful and the plot engaging, but the pace slows considerably. The puzzles are harder, the interactions trickier, and the walking around extensive. It's an awkward transition, but seasoned adventure gamers will appreciate the added challenge.

Trekkers *and* gamers will appreciate Harbinger's skillful rendition of the *Trek* experience. Harbinger balances the best of *DS9* with game play that, for the most part, is consistently fun. The result is a game that's a winner on all fronts.

You won't be disappointed.

TIPS

- To access Karrig's personal log, remember: "Peace is many voices arguing."
- Grab the cloaking device from the fallen Red Lykotian. If you don't, you'll get a phaser in the face.
- To reactivate the Citadel's Power Room, you'll need to hit every panel on the machine's four sides in a certain order. Do it by color pairs (e.g., red, red, blue, blue, yellow, yellow, green, green).
- When you open the panel in the Citadel's Comm. Room to link communications to the Holosuite, hit the middle button.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine–Harbinger
Viacom New Media
800-469-2539

Developer: Stormfront Studios
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.99

GAME PLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	A-

If you love *DS9*, you'll love this game. Even non-Trekker adventure gamers will be impressed.

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Star Trek: Klingon

By Fredric Paul

I'm not sure you can really call Star Trek: Klingon a "game," but don't let that stop you from playing it. This full-screen, full-motion-video CD-ROM experience plays like an interactive episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, filmed from a first-person perspective. Billed as a "total-immersion holodeck simulation," the game's action takes place in the holodeck, where Klingon High Council leader Gowron (played with style, relish, and full makeup by Robert O'Reilly, reprising his TV role) endeavors to teach you Klingon culture as you take on the role of a Klingon boy named Pok. (For an interview with O'Reilly, see Star Talk, page 20.)

Turn your PC into a *Star Trek* holodeck to explore what it means to be a Klingon.

You watch the video through Pok's eyes as he prepares for the Klingon Rite of Accession. I don't want to give away the plot, but take it as a given that things go horribly awry and it's up to Pok and Gowron to set them right. Along the way, Pok will be initiated into Klingon adulthood, pilot a Bird of Prey, encounter alien races, learn the Klingon art of negotiation, and master a number of other skills.

At each of the 20 decision points in the 90-minute-long narrative, the action stops and a twirling Klingon dagger (or d'k Tahg) appears for you to use as a cursor. Click on the correct choice and the simulation continues; choose poorly and the simulation fades back to the holodeck, where Gowron lectures poor Pok on Klingon customs, duties, and honor. The simulation then resumes from the last decision point. You can't lose, but you may get frustrated and give up. Fortunately, you can save your game at any time.

To examine your surroundings more closely and gain clues about what to do, you can freeze the frame and bring up a spinning Klingon Empire symbol as a cursor. Click on information points to hear Majel Barret, the voice of the *Enterprise*'s computer, read descriptions of the various objects and explain their significance.

If that's not enough background material, and it probably won't be, the two-disc package also includes a Klingon Language Lab module that teaches you meaning and pronunciation for common Klingon words and phrases. The Holodeck mode gives video examples of word usage taken from the game, while the Phoneme section has Gowron demonstrate the Klingon alphabet. The Drill section tests your alien knowledge with written and audio quizzes. The Language Lab is cool, but you'll have to be pretty dedicated to spend much time with it.

tlhIngan Hol Dajatlh'a' ("Do you speak Klingon?")

The best part of Star Trek: Klingon is that it almost lives up to the production values of a real episode of *ST: TNG*. The video itself—compressed using Duck Corp. TrueMotion technology—is a bit blocky, and it hiccups occasionally, especially if you have less than 16MB of RAM. But the acting is as good as that in a *Trek* episode, which makes it far superior to what you see in most computer games. (The trick may be that it's difficult to overact a Klingon part.)

Directed by Jonathan Frakes (*ST: TNG*'s Commander Riker), the plot moves along swiftly and surely. And because Trekkers are already familiar with the characters and cultures, it's easy to get caught up in the story and actually care how it turns out.

If you're looking for a traditional adventure game, you won't find it here. Except for one or two puzzles, the decision points are laughably easy, and you can usually just keep trying until you get it right. Given the shortness of the simulation—the entire thing lasts only half-again longer than most episodes of *Trek*— the $70 price tag is also a bit daunting.

But hey—if you long to live in the *Star Trek* universe, it just doesn't get any better than this unique "total-immersion simulator." Qapla'!

Star Trek: Klingon
Simon & Schuster
800-910-0099

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD
Requires: 486/25, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $69.95

GAME PLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B

Traditional adventure gamers will not be amused by this exploration of Klingon culture, but Trekkers will revel in what feels like their own interactive *Trek* episode.

CHEATS

Hit the F key to skip through decision points if you can't figure out the correct response. Cheating is without honor, but I won't tell Worf if you won't.

TIPS

• "Act and you shall have dinner. Think and you shall be dinner." • To solve the bomb puzzle near the end, use your ears, not your eyes.

Been there, done that

CHAOS

You must solve the island's Myst-eries while protecting your hide in CHAOS.

CHAOS
HarperCollins Interactive
800-424-6234

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	D
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	C-
OVERALL	D+

After being forced to spend several hours with HarperCollins' CHAOS, I began to wonder, "What were these people thinking?" Game makers, it seems, can be in such a hurry to make money, they'll release just about anything. CHAOS is so shameless in its cloning of Myst that it not only has the look and feel of the classic, it even has a rocket ship on its island.

As the game's explorer, you awaken in a dumpy trailer, gather your pocket computer/phone, and head off to take a look around. You soon discover that you're a wanted man. Your credit balance is in the negative and a hired goon is leaving you nasty messages. To save yourself, you've got to figure out how to get an inheritance from your rich, eccentric Uncle Prospero.

Along the way, you must solve abstruse puzzles and gaze admiringly at the 3-D-rendered environments, constantly fighting the urge to hit Ctrl–Alt–Del. There's simply no sense of urgency to keep you going—nothing compelling enough to pull you through the game.

Lest you think I'm merely a ball of spite, I will note that CHAOS does have a few positives. The video clips of the people you meet are fun to watch. Many of the characters manage to be moderately entertaining in their speeches, especially the goon who's out to get you. But it's not enough to keep this game afloat. Let me assure you, the description on the back of the box is far more entertaining than the actual game.—*Shane Mooney*

Murder in the city

SFPD Homicide, Case File: The Body in the Bay

SFPD Homicide
Grolier Interactive
800-285-4534

Developer: InterWorks
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Requires: 486/33, DOS 5.0 and Win 3.1 or Win 95, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $39.99

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B-

It's your first day on the job and they've just fished an unidentified body out of San Francisco Bay. It's up to you to identify the victim and figure out who killed him. You've got two weeks and the resources of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD).

It's up to you to figure out who put this body in the bay.

When your partner tells you that police work "isn't all glamour," he isn't kidding. SFPD Homicide, Case File: The Body in the Bay bills itself as "A True Crime Mystery Game," and the emphasis is on the "True." This isn't an interactive version of a TV cop show; it's an in-depth attempt to re-create the day-to-day life of a homicide detective. Unlike TV detectives, you won't get to shoot anybody. Instead, you'll gather evidence at the crime scene, send items to the lab for analysis, comb computer files, interview witnesses, interrogate suspects—and then put the pieces together to finger the killer.

The double-disc, dual-platform game is based on a real San Francisco murder case, and the cop who solved it, Kevin Mullen, is on hand to help you out. While the crime scenes and other locations are still photos, the interviews and interrogations consist of talking-head video segments. Here you can ask some tough questions based on evidence and interviews, especially those you conduct with other witnesses. The video is bare-bones and the acting, much of it by current and former SFPD officers, ranges from stiff to stiffer, but at least the lingo and settings are authentic.

Players will have to criss-cross the city, from pet shops to construction sites—returning to key spots again and again to talk to everyone and dig up all the clues. And everything you do eats into your two-week time limit. You'll need patience, a good memory, and a keen eye, or you won't get anywhere.

Everything you find goes into your casebook, and when you have enough evidence, you can create a suspect file, get a search warrant, bring in your suspect, and make an arrest.

SFPD Homicide may not be *NYPD Blue*, but if you've always wanted to solve a real murder case, this is as close as you're likely to get. —*Fredric Paul*

Prehistoric fun for the whole family

Dinotopia

Teachers, parents, and noted biologists may claim that dinosaurs have long been extinct, but the latest game from Turner Interactive proves that the giant beasts are very much alive and well, and living on a forgotten island called Dinotopia.

You learn this amazing fact when you, Nathan Drake, along with your sister, Constance, are washed overboard while heading back to the New World. You awaken on an unfamiliar beach, cold and alone. You know that you must find your sister, and then together, maybe you can figure out how to get off this island and back to the rest of your family.

Set in the late 19th century, Dinotopia's high-resolution graphics and pleasant score help immerse you in its prehistoric world. Though the game's geared toward young players, there's enough entertainment value for unjaded adults to enjoy themselves along with their kids.

High production values and interesting characters make Dinotopia worth a look.

Dinotopia
Turner Interactive
800-294-0022

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B-

As in the usual adventure game, you have to go from place to place, gather inventory, and use the various items you find to solve the obligatory puzzle or two. But what makes Dinotopia different from other adventure games is a compelling combination of Super VGA–rendered environments, sparing use of quality video, and interesting characters, both human and saurian.

Like its island setting, though, the game is small: I finished it in just a few hours. Still, if you're looking for a quality title to play with your children—one that requires a little more brain power than Mario Bros. and isn't a first-person slayathon—you'll definitely want to check out Dinotopia.

—Shane Mooney

Same old, same old

Return Fire

You'd think that when a game dating back to the Commodore 64 gets ported to the PC, it would bring along some new features. Sorry, but that's not the case with the latest incarnation of Silent Software's action classic Return Fire.

Oh sure, this Win 95 version of Return Fire boasts more than 200 game maps—all the ones from the original game, its Maps Of Death add-on, and even some originals—but the game is pretty much the same one we've all played on the Commodore or 3DO.

Wanton destruction is the name of this game.

If you're not familiar with Return Fire, it's basically capture-the-flag with high-tech hardware. You start out in a bunker with three tanks, three self-propelled rocket launchers, three helicopters, and eight jeeps. Making careful use of your equipment, you must find your opponent's flag and bring it back to your bunker before your opponent steals your flag.

Return Fire
Time-Warner Interactive
No Direct Sales

Developer: Silent Software
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, Win 95, VESA-compatible graphics, mouse
List Price: $49.99

GAME PLAY:	C-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	C-

In single-player mode, the game grows dull very quickly. The only computer-controlled vehicles to destroy are some wimpy drone helicopters that attack you if you stay in one place for too long, and no one is trying to capture your flag. So it's just a matter of methodically blasting away at enemy gun emplacements and fortifications until you accomplish your objective.

Against another human opponent, however, the game shines. The variety of vehicles and maps creates a virtually endless number of ways to wreak destruction on your best buddy. But since no new multiplayer options were added to Return Fire in its move to Win 95, two players must still square off at the same keyboard using a split-screen view of the action. Ever hear of a modem, or at least a serial cable? Then there's this thing called a local-area network… *—Steve Klett*

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A prettier, buggier MechWarrior 2

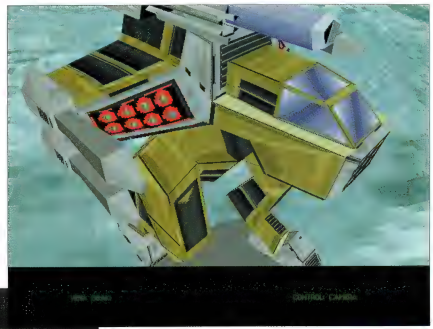
EarthSiege 2

By Steve Klett

If imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery, Sierra's much-anticipated EarthSiege 2 must have Activision blushing outright.

EarthSiege 2 is, of course, a sequel to Dynamix's widely popular, hard-as-hell EarthSiege, but in many ways, the new game is more reminiscent of MechWarrior 2. No matter how you slice it, the futuristic, mechanized combat-simulation wars have kicked off in earnest.

Like MechWarrior 2, EarthSiege 2's story is barely worth mentioning: Those damn Cybrid HERCs are back to take over the Earth, and this time, they're determined. In case you missed the original EarthSiege, Cybrid HERCs are massive robot assault vehicles that man built as slaves. Surprise of surprises, the 'bots turned on their creators and tried to seize control, which you (hopefully) prevented. Now they're back in larger numbers and are prepping for a final, massive assault. Surprise again: The fate of the free world depends on your ability to wield the cataclysmic power of your small army of HERCs to rid the world of the Cybrid threat.



In your HERC you're a mean, mean, death-dealing machine.

You won't always be hoofing it; some missions require you to pilot the Razor fighter.

A total of 50 missions take place in five different terrains, culminating in a lunar showdown with Cybrid leader and perennial pain-in-the-ass Prometheus. As in MechWarrior 2, you can customize your HERC and those of your squadmates with a wide range of awesome weaponry. Unlike MechWarrior 2, the game doesn't let you tweak your engine or armor settings.

The first thing players of the original EarthSiege will notice is the sequel's new texture-mapped terrain makeover. The terrain graphics are simply breathtaking, and blow away MechWarrior 2's, at least from a technical standpoint. The moon's rolling landscapes are particularly impressive. (The same graphics engine powers Sierra's Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2, reviewed on page 82.) The game is also chock full of 3-D modeled and texture-mapped objects, vehicles, and weapons. Heck, even the fire and explosions are 3-D.

EarthSiege vets will find this game infinitely more playable than the original. EarthSiege's control scheme was atrocious, requiring you to use nearly every key on the keyboard, and things didn't get much better with a joystick. Controlling your HERC's turret, torso, and direction in unison was a performance worthy of a ballet. To make matters worse, there was only one skill level: extremely difficult.

With EarthSiege 2, you can still use nearly every key on the keyboard, but a joystick (a Flightstick Pro or Sidewinder work best) and four or five buttons are really all you need. Better yet, a new auto-tracking feature keeps your aim on track while you concentrate on driving your HERC.

The thing is, most EarthSiege fans have probably played—and finished, and finished again—MechWarrior 2. If that describes you, you'll undoubtedly notice a startling similarity between the musical scores of EarthSiege 2 and MechWarrior 2, though EarthSiege 2's is

EarthSiege 2
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Developer: Dynamix
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	B+

An entertaining, great-looking, but unoriginal sequel.

Cybrid HERCs blow up *real* good.

Walking through a Cybrid base and blasting everything in sight is worth EarthSiege 2's price of admission.

not quite up to Mech's high standards. You'll also recognize the sultry female voice EarthSiege 2 uses for the computer that updates you on the battle or mission status of your HERC. Again, it's good, but not quite as good as Mech's.

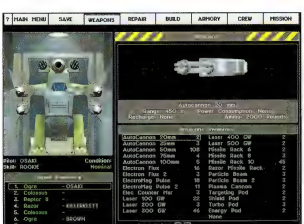
Thankfully, EarthSiege 2 does bring some nice new features to the table. For example, you're not limited to driving HERCs for the entire game; you also get to pilot a Razor fighter for some airborne action. It's pretty hard to control the Razor effectively, though, so it's not always the weapon of choice, even when it's available. Another nice touch carried over from the original game is the need to salvage parts from Cybrid 'bots you destroy to build new HERCs and weapons. This aspect adds a nice recycling element to all the wanton destruction.

In addition, the new game vastly improves the artificial intelligence of your fellow HERC pilots. Your HERC wingmen do what you tell them, when you tell them, and they'll do it effectively more times than not. That was a weakness in MechWarrior 2.

Unfortunately, while EarthSiege 2 boasts an impressive number of missions—50 compared to Mech 2's 30—they are sadly lacking in imagination. You basically have five sets of 10 missions that take place in settings with different terrain. Each set of missions more or less consists of similar patrol, base-protect, escort, and intelligence-gathering tasks, with the only real variable being the terrain. Many of the missions are also embarrassingly short; I completed several in 10 minutes or less.

Sadly, the game also appears to have its share of bugs and other limiting factors. For example, on one escort mission I successfully guided a wounded HERC back to base, but the mission wasn't judged a success until I went back out (wounded HERC in tow) to knock out a single isolated enemy HERC that was miles away from my base. I also ran into a serious glitch in the late stages of the game that prevented me from finishing it without the aid of some saved games from Sierra. According to the company, a patch addressing this bug and several other less-annoying ones should be available by the time you read this.

If you can look past these issues (as I was able to), EarthSiege 2 is still a lot of fun—mainly because those Cybrids blow up real good. Go after a Cybrid with a 100mm AutoCannon and chunks of it will litter the landscape till it explodes and collapses in a satisfying heap of jagged metal. Hit a Cybrid squarely with a shot from a Pulse Cannon, and it'll explode in an Earth-shattering roar, casting debris all over the screen. Roaming through a massive Cybrid base with your squadmates and demolishing everything in sight is a cathartic experience unrivaled by other games.



Configuring your own HERC and your squadmates is a snap thanks to a simple interface.

Sierra and Dynamix have definitely done enough here to spark a debate over which is better, EarthSiege 2 or MechWarrior 2. The arguments may rage for awhile, but if I was stuck on an island and could only have one of the two games, I'd have to go with MechWarrior 2. Most Mech/HERC fans, though, should own them both.

• Outfit all your HERCs with targeting pods as soon as you can. • An Ogre HERC armed with a couple of ElectroMag Pulse Cannons and 100mm AutoCannons is virtually unstoppable. • When attacking Cybrids from a distance, adjust your shields to offer more protection to the front of your HERC. Just don't forget to divert shield power back to your rear when the action is all around you. • The Razor is most effective for scouting missions. It can also be used to direct your HERC squadmates from the air. • Keep moving. A slow or stopped HERC is a dead HERC. • Remember to let your squadmates do some of the work.

Serious PC pilots need not apply

Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2

By Anthony Lukban

All the data you need for flying and fighting is on the A-10's HUD.

Born way back in the '70s, the Fairchild-Republic A-10 ground-attack fighter was headed for mothballs when it redeemed itself with outstanding performance during The Gulf War. In a fitting tribute, Sierra has revived its classic A-10 Tank Killer game and given it a totally modern graphical makeover. The result is a fresh title that's sure to please fans of the original game, and may attract some new pilots as well.

Flying with the outside view is a tricky job but a great visual treat.

Destroying tanks with its monster 30mm gun is one of the deadly feats the A-10 is famous for.

Realism mavens should take Sierra's bold marketing claim that Silent Thunder can be configured as either an action game or a "strategy-rich simulation" with a potato-chip bag of salt. Silent Thunder is a blow-everything-up-as-fast-as-you-can action game. Period. There's no realistic flight model with stalls and buffeting, working flaps or brakes, wingmen, or anything like that. As a serious flight sim, the game never gets off the ground.

On the other hand, Silent Thunder is a solid action game with exciting visuals, awesome effects, and a rockin' soundtrack that builds on its predecessor's. Better yet, the game lets beginning pilots who aren't familiar with—and don't want to be familiar with—the complex controls of most flight sims hop right in the cockpit and get a feel for the raw power of one of the most fearsome death machines in existence.

Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Developer: Dynamix
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B+

Expect hot arcade action, not flight-sim realism, in Silent Thunder.

Players get 24 missions split into 3 campaigns, ranging from tracking down a drug dealer in Columbia to helping save an international film star from being kidnapped in Korea (regular *A-Team* fodder). Overall, the missions are fairly challenging, but they tend to get repetitive after a while. You can only blow up so many buildings before the been-there-done-thats set in.

Silent Thunder makes the A-10's sophisticated weaponry easy to master by taking care of complicated procedures such as pickling and branding your target for you. Likewise, while the sharply rendered A-10 cockpit art has a wide variety of working dials and gauges, the heads-up-display shows all the vital info you need to fly.

The most striking element by far is Silent Thunder's smooth, textured terrains and breathtaking vistas—all exquisitely rendered in 640-by-480 Super VGA. Because A-10s are slow and must fly low to avoid radar detection, the awesome graphics make a big difference. Whether you're swooping in low over the trees of the Columbian jungle or skimming the harsh desert terrain of the Middle East, you get quite an eyeful of detail in each terrain. Terrific effects such as 3-D fire and explosions, texture-mapped 3-D flying objects and vehicles, and the thumping, CD-quality rock soundtrack add to the fun.

There is a penalty for the game's beauty, however: Terrain maps are limited to a set amount of square footage. When you fly outside the map area, enemies quickly grow nasty and inform you of your transgression. These boundaries also apply to altitude: fly too high and you are immediately warned—if not punished—by enemy MiGs. Such barriers limit the game play somewhat, and create an even stronger arcade feel.

That may annoy flight-sim fanatics. But if you're looking for exciting, arcade-style combat rather than a quality flight-sim experience, this is money well-spent.

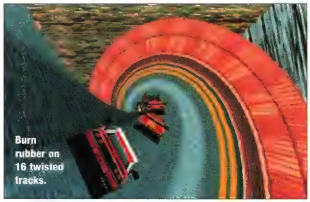
- Remember, this isn't a realistic flight model. You can turn using just your rudders—a handy trick when you need to turn at low altitude and avoid the ground.
- After you finish a primary mission goal, your commanding officer will usually ask you to take on a side mission, which is far deadlier. You don't have to accept it to advance.
- When choosing weapons, load up with as many maverick missiles as possible on your hardpoints. They are more accurate and convenient than freefalling bombs.

Whiplash

PLAY the Demo on the disc

Sometimes, all the strategy games and simulations in the world aren't enough to suppress a gamer's raging desire to get on the road and burn rubber. Whiplash provides the fast cars, treacherous tracks, dangerous opponents—and did I mention burning rubber?

Whiplash wastes little time on its story, positing something about a near future in which eight major auto manufacturers vie for top honors in an internationally broadcast championship. Drivers race as aggressively as the durability of their vehicles will allow. Guess who's been tapped to lead one lucky corporate team into the gauntlet?



Whiplash
Interplay
800-969-4263

Developer: Gremlin Interactive
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B

Once you accept the challenge, getting into the race is simple: pick a car, pick a track, pick a race, and hit the asphalt. Whether played from the driver-seat or chase-car view, Whiplash's game engine is impressive. Skidding, sliding, soaring, and colliding are rendered smoothly throughout each of the 16 tracks. The rotating 360-degree spinouts are seamless. Some of the choicest stretches of track take you upside-down through loops and corkscrews, and the warping perspective never misses a beat.

Perhaps the best thing about the game is that it's networkable for up to 16 players, allowing true driving mayhem. It also demands some interesting tactical considerations that elevate it from the realm of a standard arcade sprint. Each of the eight cars is a different compromise between speed and durability, allowing you to tailor your selection to your racing style. In the 16-car championship mode, you race as part of a two-car team and can communicate with your teammate during the race, issuing orders like "go for the line" or "take out other cars." As another nice touch, cars take visible damage during the race and engines will actually catch on fire.

—Daniel Morris

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By Shane Mooney

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$19.99
Bk-Code 0941
Platform: PC CD-ROM

EarthSiege 2 Official Player's Guide

By John Fisher

Prometheus is back with a vengeance after setting up a new base on the moon. This time, he's building more of his Cybrids (robots) and sending them to Earth on a mission to kill all humans. The future of Earth and all humanity is in your hands, and this strategy guide is your best chance for survival.
$19.99
Bk-Code 0879
Platform: PC CD-ROM

The Beast Within Official Player's Guide

By Corey Sandler

Help Gabriel Knight and his capable assistant, Grace, investigate werewolf attacks in Germany. This guide includes a comprehensive walk-through, a hint section, and a look at the creators of this amazing video adventure.
$19.99
Bk-Code 078X
Platform: PC CD-ROM

GemStone III Official Player's Guide

By Barry Brenesal

In the Official Guide to the amazing on-line world of GemStone you'll learn to talk to wizards and warriors, cast spells, hunt for buried treasure and serve your king. Created with the game's designers and testers, GemStone III Official Player's Guide gives you all the keys to unlock the secrets to this unique interactive experience.
$19.99
Bk-Code 0895
Platform: Internet

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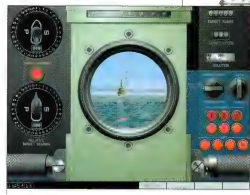
9606PC

Silent Hunter

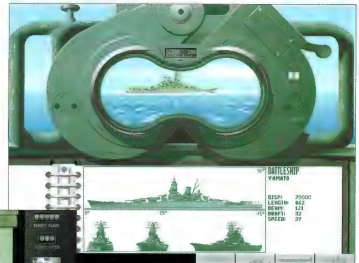
By Daniel Morris

Silent Hunter puts you at the helm of a U.S. Navy submarine pursuing an undersea campaign against the Japanese Imperial Navy in World War II. Your battleground stretches from Midway to Formosa, and your job is to sink anything flying the flag of the Rising Sun.

The game offers you command of one of nine submarines—from the small, nimble S class to the massive and powerful Tench class. Game play focuses on tactics, not strategy, and even in the Campaign mode your pre-patrol orders are never more complicated than "Sail to East China Sea and sink all enemy shipping."



You can control most of your sub's functions from the periscope view.



The *Yamato*'s a sitting duck! Identifying ships is easy thanks to an online database.

You can begin your campaign at any time between December 1941 and the end of the war, letting you decide for yourself whether to challenge the awesome Imperial Navy at the height of its supremacy or mop up the remaining pickets of the Japanese isles at the end of the war. Navigation is thankfully simple, accomplished with a few mouse clicks on a single map screen. Cruising is generally a painless process of clicking on waypoints and then waiting for sonar contacts. The game also includes a dozen historical scenarios, composed mostly of straightforward search-and-destroy missions.

If you're used to thinking of naval simulations as a series of technical readouts, Silent Hunter's gorgeously detailed graphics will come as a pleasant surprise. The rotating view from the conn is replete with finely chiseled waves and wavecaps, discernible currents, ship wakes, and dense skies and clouds. Enemy ships retain sharp detail even when viewed at the highest magnifications of your periscope or binoculars, right down to the Japanese flags whipping in the wind.

SSI seems to have put real care into making Silent Hunter easy-to-use and historically accurate. The target-acquisition and attack procedures are covered in a few well-conceived screens; you'll do most of your work from the periscope view. Another winner is a hot-button feature that zips you to any screen with a single keystroke, eliminating nerve-wracking menu-scrambling in the heat of battle.

Even landlubbers should have no difficulty diving right in, thanks to useful realism and difficulty controls. At the advanced settings, Silent Hunter will satisfy players looking for an all-out simulation. (For a fun but enervating demonstration, try manually computing a firing solution for your torpedo. Calculus degree recommended.) Novices can ease into command by increasing the voltage from scenario to scenario.

SUB TIPS

- **Ambush is the name of the game. Slip quietly into a busy sea traffic lane and let your prey come to you.**
- **Pick your fights at night, when you have a much better chance of escaping from your attack.**
- **Pay attention to the Interviews. These veterans can teach you some hard-won lessons and tactics.**
- **The Narwhal- and Balao-class subs are able to dive well below the maximum depth of other subs. This can allow you to get under many enemy depth-charge attacks.**
- **If you want to survive to see that sweetheart back home, concentrate on hit-and-run attacks against lightly protected merchant convoys.**

Before you cast off, it's worth taking the time to go through the game's wonderful Interviews section. Accompanied by newsreel footage, real-life sub commanders—including William "Bud" Gruner, captain of the USS *Skate* and a technical advisor for the game—take you on a fascinating historical tour of submarine warfare, from life aboard the boat to recollections of desperate battles.

The finishing touch on this versatile simulation is a fast, simple scenario editor that grants you control over every facet of an engagement. Type, number, experience, and battle quality of the enemy; weather, time of day, date in the war, and water conditions. The exhaustive options are further augmented by the realism and difficulty settings.

Silent Hunter is about as much fun as you can have under water. It captures the visceral intensity of submarine warfare—the silent running, the midnight sneak attacks, the desperate crash dives to outrun descending depth charges….All the claustrophobic anxiety of pursuit and the exhilarating elation of the kill. Happy hunting.

Silent Hunter
Strategic Simulations
408-838-6800

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $55

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	A

An addictive sub simulation that blends technical seamanship with visceral thrills.

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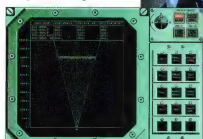
http://www.lglass.com

Fast Attack

By Peter Olafson

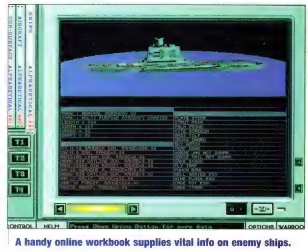
You'll access most of your sub's functions from the control room.

There's a lot going on beneath the surface in Fast Attack, and perhaps not enough happening on top of it. Fast Attack is the second of two Software Sorcery games distributed by Sierra On-Line. This elaborate modern-day sub sim combines the glossy good looks that have become its developer's trademark with a more cohesive design than its predecessor, Defender Of The Crown variant Conqueror A.D. 1086 (for review, see February 1996, page 96).



Finding and destroying targets is a complex but rewarding process.

Fast Attack puts you in command of a Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarine, and the complexity of the simulation was something of a revelation for me. Brought up on games like Silent Service and 688 Attack Sub, I've always maintained the naive expectation that I could line up sub with target, let a torpedo fly, and sit back and watch the fireworks.



A handy online workbook supplies vital info on enemy ships.

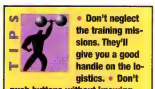
Not here. Not hardly. This is rigorous work, to the extent that finishing even the tutorial missions—not to mention the game—is a significant accomplishment. Guiding a torpedo to its target involves using an array of detailed screens to analyze sonar signature, load up ordinance, find the range, obtain a "firing solution," "ping" the target with sonar, double- and triple-check your battleplan, and finally, let slip the hotdogs of war. When a ship goes down, you'll know you've earned it, because that's the only way they go down at all.

I don't know how real subs work, but I'll wager it's something like this. Fast Attack feels real—an impression reinforced by the crew's businesslike chatter of reports and confirmations, and the ability to activate functions by clicking on parts of the control room. (For all the complexity, the helm is very easy to operate.)

And that's only a drop in the ocean. Fast Attack offers 11 training missions, 5 battlesets (from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Japan), and a career mode. Your sub also comes equipped with ship-killing Harpoon and Tomahawk missiles, and more than a few neat gadgets, including a "warbook" that covers every ship in the game.

Underwater, all's well. (You may wonder at the lack of a provision for damage control, but Sierra says it is handled automatically, and invisibly, by the game's artificial intelligence.) On the surface, things aren't so good. The payoff for all your hard work is rather cheesy: The periscope view, with its pitiful 2-D depictions of ships and a swelling sea, is a conspicuous weak link. Fast Attack seems more comfortable with its abstract, electronic version of submarine warfare than the real one, and it's easy to feel distanced from the action by all the gadgetry and the polished representational animations. Admittedly, today's real submariners, who can obliterate ships hundreds of miles away, don't always get to see their handiwork. But this is a game, not just a simulation, and it begs for some visceral satisfaction.

Fortunately, the feeling of distance will pass. The first time the alarm goes off—indicating someone's pinging you—you won't feel distant at all.



TIPS

- **Don't neglect the training missions. They'll give you a good handle on the logistics.**
- **Don't push buttons without knowing what they do. (Closing a torpedo tube door too soon will cause you to lose control of the weapon.)**
- **He who runs at flank speed while being tracked by enemy subs is named Davey Jones.**

Fast Attack
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Developer: Software Sorcery
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	C+
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B-

A deep, challenging sub sim with a half-hearted graphical payoff.

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Mystery Word Grid

		H				
			E			MYSTERY
P	I	N	C	H	W	
		R				WORD
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM ....O
CRUSH I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

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Bow tie and black vest not required

Virtual Snooker

By Shane Mooney

If you played Virtual Pool, you'll know Snooker's interface.

When Virtual Pool came out, it quite literally changed my life. Now, before you vilify what appears to be a fairly pathetic existence, let me explain.

My Virtual Pool addiction led me to play real pool, eventually for real money. I bought my own stick and all the accessories, and shortly thereafter moved my one-car family into a house with a two-car garage. The extra space, of course, was used to fit a regulation pool table.

So you can understand why I approached Virtual Snooker with no small amount of anticipation. After playing for a few days, I'm not looking for a house with more space, but I have found the only other billiards game that is as good as Virtual Pool.

I must confess that I used to view snooker much like most of America views soccer. That is, I was fairly aware of its existence and the immense following it has in other countries, but not the least bit knowledgeable about how to play. It took me a little while to grasp the rules and strategies, which are a little more penalizing than those of American pool. But once I learned the basic concepts, I quickly discovered why the Brits enjoy it so much.

You can move in or out, up or down with just a stroke of your mouse to get the best possible angle for a shot.

For those fortunate enough to own Virtual Pool, the interface and feel of Virtual Snooker will be very familiar. In essence, this is exactly the same game, albeit with a bigger table and different-colored balls.

Snooker's game play is the epitome of user-friendly. You control your cue-stick, angle, and stroke with simple mouse movements. I was able to raise the butt of my stick, decide where I wanted to hit the cue ball, and replay my mistakes over and over again.

The table physics accurately model real-world snooker. I could put a slight spin on the cue ball and have it go where it should, or bounce it off the target ball exactly the way it would in real life.

Yet, like Virtual Pool, Snooker's physics often seem a bit too perfect. On a table free from any sorts of defects, my game proved much better than it would in real life. Still, playing Virtual Snooker will undoubtedly improve your real game.

You can take on computerized opponents like E. Z. Pickens or, if you have any friends, play the game over a modem. For those whose technique is a little rusty, there's a nice multimedia section where renowned snooker champion Steve Davis shows you the basics.

The one thing that really disappointed me was the lack of in-depth instructions and rules of snooker. Virtual Snooker includes the basic rules and lessons on play, but no explanation of snooker itself. If you've never seen the game before, you'll have to do a lot of investigative work to figure everything out (and lose quite a few games to Misses Often).

Learn the physics of real snooker by seeing the direction the balls take after you hit them.

Still, for everyone who loves snooker and wants to expand their billiard horizons, this is the closest you'll get to the real thing without having to wear a bow tie and black vest.

TIPS

- To hit the balls a lot harder without breaking your mouse against your desk, hit A (for Amplify) before you shoot.
- If you aren't real familiar with snooker, watch a few demos before you begin playing. You'll want to learn the game and pick up strategy tips.
- Remember that in addition to the red-ball/colored-ball shots, you can score on a snooker, wherein you shoot the cue ball into a position in which hitting a red ball is impossible for your opponent.

Virtual Snooker
Interplay
800-468-3775

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $39.95

GAME PLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B+

If you love snooker or want to move beyond regular pool, Virtual Snooker is the best way to play on your computer.

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DECATHLON

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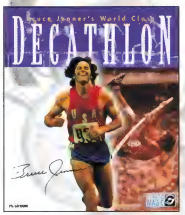

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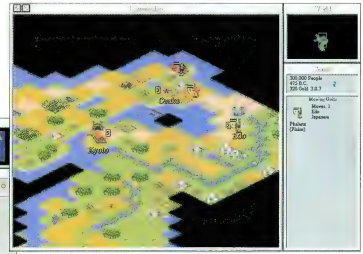
A classic is made even better

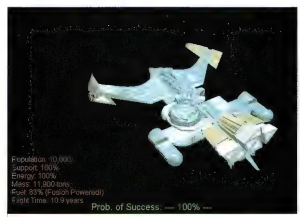
Civilization II

By Barry Brenesal

You'd better be well-versed in the principle of supply and demand.



Civ II is complex and sophisticated, yet doesn't require tedious micro-management.



Of course, your ultimate goal in Civ II is to spread your Civilization to other worlds.

Many strategy gamers' first love was Sid Meier's Civilization. Its configurability, open-endedness, and challenge simply blew people away when it came out five years ago, and its popularity hasn't waned much over time. Now, finally, this game has received a much-needed overhaul and been made even bigger—and better—in Civilization II.

Never tried Civilization before? You're in for a treat. Civ II is the ultimate computerized strategic gaming challenge. It features global competition with personalized computer and (via modem or null-modem cable) human opponents, struggling to build a dominant empire. Games span a period of 6,000 years, and each time you play, the world is different.

Civ II is complex and sophisticated, but it doesn't require tedious micro-management—its seemingly endless number of options become second nature in a relatively short amount of time. All you need is a little patience (of course, using the excellent saved tutorial game won't hurt either), and you'll quickly learn the game's essential features.

Basically, Civ II is a turn-based game of exploration, commerce, balance, and conquest. You discover the world as you settle it, gathering new resources and growing your population. More food means larger cities—or more cities, as you send out new explorers. Scientific research lets you make major technological advancements. Whatever scientific path you pursue causes several other, similar paths to be temporarily delayed. After studying the alphabet, for instance, you can choose to study map-making, code of law, writing, or mathematics. All four are equally important, but whichever one you choose first hinders your studying of the other three.

These repercussions hold true for your cities' development as well. Will you add more buildings to increase production and bring other benefits? Create new units to protect yourself and attack your neighbors? Or devote a very long time to designing Wonders of the World, which offer major advantages to your entire civilization?

You can have as few as three or as many as seven other civilizations compete against your strategic might. You select opponents from a pool of 21 adversaries with varying attitudes and styles of play. You can choose to create alliances with opponents or declare war. Establish trade routes, send out spies, and steal technologies. There's no single route to success. You'll need to use all your resources and cunning to grow strong enough to turn your enemies into ancient memories.

For all the similarities to the original, Civ II is more than a minor update. Yes, the basic elements remain the same, but much has been added or tweaked. That goes beyond the fancier—but still disappointing—graphics.

For one, Civ II is, in many respects, much more realistic than its forebear. Consider combat, for instance. Remember how in-

Civilization II
MicroProse
800-695-4263

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486, 4MB RAM, Win 3.1, Super VGA
List Price: $48.99

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	A

A wonderfully compelling upgrade of a strategy classic.

furiating it was to have your Battleship bombard a city, only to see it destroyed by a single, ancient Phalanx unit hiding behind fortified walls? The chances of this occurring have nearly vanished thanks to a greatly extended range of offensive and defensive points. Even simple Musketeer units (musket bearers, not mouse cultists, silly) are far tougher than relatively similar Phalanx units, which magnifies the gap between the units' respective technologies.

Battles used to be win-or-lose, all-or-nothing affairs, with victorious units emerging unscathed. Now, your units can emerge from victory sporting damage, resulting in reduced movement points and increased vulnerability to future attacks. The injuries heal over time, especially when your units are resting, and new city improvements speed the process even further.

The road to world domination is very long. Fortunately, it's very entertaining.

Diplomacy and bartering are important trades to master.

New, more practical combat rules enhance this feeling of a strategic war game, rather than just a strategy game with combat units. For example, when air units attack ships in port, the attackers have doubled firepower, faithfully reflecting the vulnerability of their targets. These air units can now carry land units and paradrop forces into a well-defended enemy city, which adds more fun and paranoia to the game.

In terms of production, Civ II continues to evolve into a more challenging, realistic game. In the first Civ, you could instantly switch production from one type of Wonder to another, or to a different type of unit or city improvement, as circumstances warranted. ("Oh, that Rifleman unit is approaching my capitol? Let's convert my work on Newton's Laws into a Tank.") Civ II assesses penalties for switching production types in midstream. You may lose some of your shields, for instance. (Shields are units that measure your building capacity. The more your cities produce, the more cool stuff you can build.)

Diplomacy is also emphasized more heavily the second time around. You can now declare ceasefires and take a breather before resuming your attacks on another civilization. If you're the huggy-feely type, choose a permanent alliance instead of a simple peace treaty and move your units without regard for your partner's zone of control. But if you follow up with an attack, watch out. Computerized opponents have excellent memories, and they carry grudges loaded with neutron bombs.

There's more of everything in Civilization II. Different terrain types now have two associated resources rather than one. Some swamp squares in Civilization, for instance, used to produce oil, generating four shields. Now some produce peat as well (four shields) while others have spice (four trade arrows). Some units can even transform terrain types. Settlers and engineer units can also improve farmland, preparing high-yield market gardens.

Expect many new and tweaked city improvements and World Wonders. And there are no more dead-end advances; anything you study leads to something very useful. There's an additional government type, too: Fundamentalism (others include Anarchy, Despotism, Monarchy, Communism, Republic, and Democracy). Under this rule, citizens are always happy, there's very low waste, and every city can support up to 10 military units. Budding theocrats take note, however: All scientific research is halved.

Still not enough of a challenge? Try out the new Deity mode, which surpasses the Emperor mode of old. Conversely, if the challenge ever seems too great, try the new Cheat menu, and build a Wonder or add a unit improvement instantly.

This help system is vastly more attractive, but then, you'd expect that from a sequel. The graphics are naturally more distinguished—Super VGA vs. VGA is no contest. But retaining the overall look of the old game has forced some sacrifices, and Civilization II is essentially the same visual icon-based game of old.

That shouldn't blind you to what MicroProse and Sid Meier have accomplished in Civilization II. It's a considerable achievement, significantly improving a very complex classic without losing the flavor of the original. At a time when so many airhead games with motion-picture visuals are hitting the streets, newcomers and veterans alike will welcome Civ II's imagination, depth, and fun. Civilization II is a must-have.

SIDEBAR

• **Switch from Democracy to Theocracy when you're on the verge of war, but keep the battle short. Long-term theocracies are dead weights.** • **After you research Explosives, send your engineers to drill for oil wells. This will greatly increase the number of shields you have for Wonders and Improvements production.** • **Civ II's computer opponents have excellent memories, so entice one to attack another. Spawn merry hell as you weaken everyone else while you build yourself up.** • **Employ the Cheat menu sparingly, and only at key points in the game. It will quickly kill your overall game score.**

Wizards, warriors, and dragons—oh my!

Fantasy General

By John P. Withers

Play as one of four heroes.

A simple interface makes Fantasy General easy to play—but not easy to win.

Like all game companies, Strategic Simulations (SSI) will happily milk an engine for all it's worth. Hence, it shouldn't amaze anyone that SSI has recycled the phenomenally popular Panzer General engine into a new fantasy wargame.

For those expecting a Panzer General clone with dragons instead of tanks, Fantasy General offers a welcome surprise. This game takes the best of the PG engine and adds enough new features so that no one could ever mistake it for a simple reuse of existing code.

Fantasy General lets you take on the role of one of four champions trying to rid an oppressed world of the Shadowlord, an evil tyrant who holds the entire planet in a despotic death grip. Each hero has special abilities, such as casting spells or summoning armies, that make the task easier or more challenging, depending on your choice.

At the start of the game, you get a number of units, a la Panzer General, that form the core of your army for an entire campaign. These units come from a number of different classes, including flyers, heavy infantry, siege engines, spellcasters, and cavalry. You also start with a small amount of gold, which you can use to buy extra units for your army or invest in training for current units.

A good leader doesn't send troops into the field without training.

Once you've selected all of your units, you start out on the long road to reclaiming the planet for the forces of good, continent by continent. You'll have to win a number of scenarios on each continent before moving on.

The actual combat in the scenarios contains the strongest traces of the PG engine. As in PG, you are confronted with a hex-based map; only a few of the spaces on the map are available for placing units, which is done with a few simple mouse clicks. After placing your units, you must use them to take over a set number of predetermined goals in a fixed number of turns.

Solid features clearly differentiate Fantasy General's combat mechanics. You can cast complex magic spells that increase units' combat abilities, or use other magic to destroy your enemies. Units must also deal with a realistic wound- and kill-damage system that allows some injuries to be healed just by resting, while other damage stays with a unit regardless of rest.

Better yet, while Fantasy General offers complex combat abilities and simulation, it is as easy to play as its predecessor. After spending ten minutes with the tutorial in the manual, the interface became intuitive, allowing me to concentrate on the game's most important element: tactics.

In addition to the 20-plus linked scenarios in the campaign mode, Fantasy General offers a play-by-e-mail option allowing two players to go head to head, as well as an arena option that lets you build your own scenarios.

With solid graphics, great playability, and an absolutely superb classical music score, Fantasy General does for fantasy wargaming what Panzer General did for WWII games: it makes the genre fun, easy to play, and tactically challenging. All aspiring mage generals should consider adding Fantasy General to their spell book.

TIPS

- **Your core units are your life. Let your volunteers take as much pain as possible and rest your core units at every opportunity.**
- **Spellcasters using death wounds (which turn all the wounds your troops inflict into kills) on your other units can make for a fierce combination. Make sure you don't outrun your casters.**
- **Magic and mechs don't mix. Use your magic units to attack mechanized units, but shield them with mortals when the enemy mechs are on the offensive.**

Fantasy General
Strategic Simulations
800-601-7529

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386DX/40, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: $50

GAME PLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	A-

Solid wargaming from start to finish.

The Complete Carriers At War

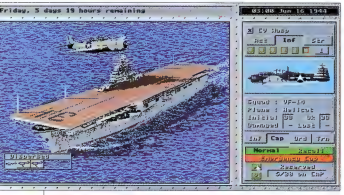
The Complete Carriers At War
Strategic Studies Group
904-469-8880

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486, 4MB RAM, DOS 3.1
List Price: $69.95

GAME PLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	D
OVERALL	C-

The Complete Carriers At War (CAW) is a compilation of everything ever done with the CAW series: the 4-year-old CAW engine, a host of old scenarios, a new scenario, and a scenario editor. While this seems like a lot of meat (more than $200 worth, as the box boasts), it's past its prime.

In CAW, you take command of one or more task forces during World War II. You can choose any side in an engagement, with the computer artificial intelligence (AI) controlling the remaining forces. The gist of the game is to use your Carrier Air Groups to hammer the enemy before they hammer you. You can fight as just about any nationality, including the U.S., Japan, Great Britain, Germany, and France.



Quality AI is the only thing keeping CAW afloat.

On the bright side, this game boasts incredible AI depth, some excellent fog-of-war features, and very realistic details on enemy spotting. An even bigger bonus is the scenario editor, which provides depth of control and AI editing that are virtually unmatched among strategy games. (Just be warned: the AI control scripts may seem like more of a programming language than a simple editor.)

Looming beneath the surface, though, are some pretty major faults. For one, the game's not easy to control—you must manage dozens of screens to perform the simplest actions. The graphics and general feel of the game, which weren't cutting edge when they were new, are now four years out of date. And Strategic Studies has made no provisions for campaign or multiplayer action.

Serious naval-sim fans will like this title for the depth of the AI and the scenario-editing features, but casual wargamers may want a more up-to-date haven for their defense dollars, such as SSI's Silent Hunter or Great Naval Battles. —*John P. Withers*

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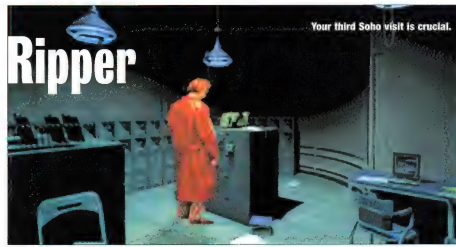
Bag the serial madman with these PC Games hints.

Catch the Ripper


Your third Soho visit is crucial.

By Bill Meyer

Ripper, the new techno-thriller from Take 2 Interactive, not only scores big with sky-high production values, it also boasts an impressive collection of daunting puzzles. If you're having trouble nabbing the Ripper, check out our hints for some of the game's tougher scenarios.

Catherine Powell's Apartment

There are several tricky puzzles in Catherine's apartment; each one gives you access to some of her secret research on the Ripper. To get her notebook, you'll have to enter her cyberspace WELL. For her WELL password:

1. Examine the abstract fish painting on the left wall.

2. Find and examine the poster with maps of the constellations.

3. Remembering Catherine's note at the *Herald*, click on the crystal tray.

4. Notice the connection between fish, constellations, and crystals.

5. Map out the Pisces constellation in the tray for the WELL password.

Time for a little zone conversion.

Wofford Cottage

To obtain murdered cyberarchitect Hamilton Wofford's WELL password, you'll need to solve three puzzles in his cottage to gain three vacuum tubes. With the tubes, charge the monitor and reveal the word.

Table Maze Puzzle

1. Examine the maze, passageways, and gates.

2. Each table button opens or closes two gates.

3. Notice the color of each button's indicator light.

4. Make three choices, causing only buttons 1 and 4 to be green.

5. The vacuum tube appears.

Cash Register Puzzle

1. Climb the stairs and examine the patent award on the wall.

2. Write down the patent number: P2X255127.5A.

3. "P" is patent, "A" is award, and the "X" is a multiply sign.

4. Multiply (2) by (255,127.5) to get $10,255.

5. Locate the cash register in Wofford's bedroom.

6. On the register, press nickel, dime, quarter, and nickel.

7. The vacuum tube appears.

Alarm Clock Puzzle

1. Examine the clock in Wofford's bedroom. Note the time (2:35 p.m.).

2. Return downstairs and find three alarm clocks set to zero.

3. Using the time-zone chart, set the pyramid clock to 2:35 p.m. Egyptian time and the cuckoo clock to 2:35 p.m. German time.

4. Set the green, modern clock to 2:35 p.m. military time (14:35).

5. The vacuum tube appears.

Soho Police Station

After opening Catherine's WELL and defeating its ICE (Intrusion Countermeasure Electronic) monster with liberal use of your shield, you'll obtain Catherine's digital notebook. To decode it, go to the police station (must be your third visit):

1. Talk to Sergeant Brannon. Magnotta will interrupt, dropping a gun and security card in Brannon's tray. You'll soon learn that the police personnel files are located in the file room.

2. Take the card, go to the file room, open the cabinet, and read Magnotta's file.

3. Notice the password "Slayer." The notebook unscrambles.

4. Read the notebook's contents for a clue about a book in Catherine's apartment that contains a compact disc. Put the disc in her computer to reveal a formula.

New York University

To gather more information on Dr. Clare Burton, grab her security card from the front desk of the Tribeca Medical Center and break into her office. You'll notice the signature of Dr. Vivien Santiago, one of Burton's old professors, inside a book. Now you can travel to NYU to visit Santiago. After exhausting all your questions, you'll learn that Burton belonged to the cyberspace group Web Runners, which still meets. To find the location of the meetings, examine the bulletin board in the hallway.

1. Look at each board posting that includes numbers.

The NYU bulletin board.

2. Move numbered postings to the bottom of the bulletin board.

3. Arrange postings so that select words form a sentence with an address. The order of numbers in the correct arrangement of postings reveals the entry code to the Web Runners' loft.

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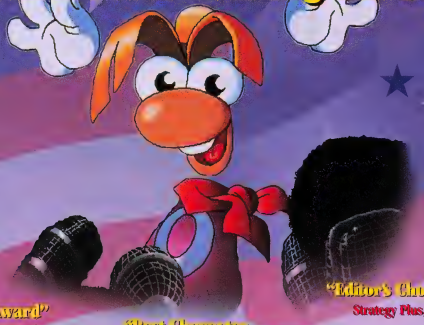

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"Best Character, Best Animation, Best Soundtrack" 1996 Video Game Buyer's Guide

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Strategy & Tactics

Finding the price of freedom too steep? These tips will get you on track.

Wing Commander IV

By Shane Mooney

Reunited: Colonel Blair and Maniac are back at it.

The ferocious cry of the Kilrathi may be little more than a distant purring for you, Colonel Blair, but remember, the price of freedom is never short-term. You may have vanquished an eons-old enemy, but now there is new conflict, and a new set of rules. Seeing as your flying skills may be a little rusty from all that farming, how 'bout some advice?

Combat Clues

Before you jump into battle, take a minute to look everything over. Be sure to synchronize your guns by hitting Ctrl–G. Naturally, you'll inflict the most damage if all your guns fire at exactly the same time.

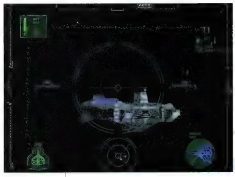
You may have one of the hottest ships this side of the Andromeda, but it'll do you no good if you can't target anything. There are a few things you need to do to be effective at taking down the enemy:

- Match his speed. If you go too slow, the enemy will leave you far behind in his vapor trail. If you go too fast, you run the risk of overshooting him, or worse yet, colliding with him. Lock on your target by hitting L and then match his speed by tapping Y. Be sure to hit Y frequently to match your target's changing speeds.
- Trust the little green circle on the I.T.T.S. By aiming at a ship, you're only going to end up firing behind him unless you're practically on top of him. Concentrate on firing when you see the red "sure hit" bracket light up.
- Like a hungry cheetah chasing down his prey, pick your target and focus on it. Don't be tempted to take a shot at whatever ship crosses your path—it'll only distract you from your main objective. If you're shooting at every ship, you might do some damage, but not enough to finish any one ship before the enemy finishes you.
- There are times when you'll be asked to take out capital ships that are roughly the size of a small city and have the armament of a large country. The first thing you need to do is look for the weak points, which are the bridge, the rear thrusters, and anywhere inside the hull. Hitting them where it hurts will do 50 percent more damage than normal. For the bridge, look for the section with a lot of windows. The rear thrusters, of course, are the big glowing areas in the rear. And any capital ship that carries fighters has a launch bay just like the one you came from. Fly through there and do some serious damage.
- Sometimes, when things are getting just a little too hot to handle, it's best to retreat. Nobility aside, there are times when it's better to run to safety than face insurmountable odds and die. Then you aren't much good for anything. During a lull in the battle or between waypoints, give your ship some time to rebuild its systems.

Effective use of Target Lock can make the difference.

Morale

As in Wing Commander III, you can affect morale with the conversation choices you make. Though it's not as important here as it was in Wing III, you still need to think carefully before saying something discouraging. One of the main characters you always want to keep happy is the mechanic, Pliers. He'll still do his job when he's down, but he won't be quite so magnanimous if he feels he's being slighted. Also, when it comes to your fellow fighters, Catscratch, Hawk, and Panther's flying abilities are affected by low spirits. Everyone else's morale stays pretty much the same. Just remember: Keep people happy and they'll keep you alive.



Enemy carriers are easiest to kill from the inside.

OFFICIAL PLAYER'S GUIDE

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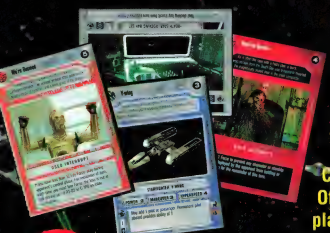

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College Slam

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•At the title page, hit up, down, left, right, up, down, left, right to enable eight hidden fraternity teams. (You'll see an expanded roster under Team Selects.)
•At the Today's Matchup screen:
(1) Hit left, right, up, up, left, right to boost your dunking power.
(2) Increase your three-point-shot percentage by hitting shoot, shoot, shoot, up, up, up.
(3) Activate Baby Mode (players become small) by hitting up, shoot, down, shoot, pass, pass.
(4) Down, down, down, shoot, shoot, shoot activates Big-Head Mode (players' heads grow).

Descent II

"Where am I goin'?
Where's my Guide-Bot? Yeeeaahhrrggghhhhh!"
Yup, this one's a doozy. For a little help, enter these weapon-giving cheat codes during game play.

GODZILLA: Monster mode (your weapons cause maximum damage)
ROCKGRL: Full automap (shows you areas you haven't explored yet)
ALIFALAFEL: Gives you all powerups
HELPVISHNU: Resurrects Guide-Bot or gives you a second one if the first one is still alive

TekWar

Bascom been chewing you out for killing civilians? Baddies keep slaughtering ya? Time to end the Tek scourge once and for all.

During the game, hit NUM LOCK for invulnerability.

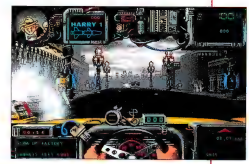
When loading the game, type TEKD1 and one of these cheat codes (e.g., TEKD1 NOCHASE):

NOCHASE: Removes the shooting enemies from the game
NOENEMIES: Removes everyone but you
NOGUARD: Removes the guards
NOSTROLL: Removes the innocent bystanders

Road Warrior

For a guy who nails pedestrians and blows up buildings, you're surprisingly impatient. Fortunately, when things get slow, you can leap ahead to the next level and keep the action rolling.

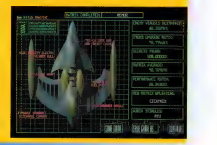
When launching the game, type RW 985WXM F7 at the command line. Once the game is running, hit F7 to skip levels. (If you're in the middle of a mission, you'll skip to the end of it.)



ShadowWraith

Aww… you're just a lonely soul in cyberspace. But you're not going out without a fight. While combing mazes and taking corners, use these special codes to arm yourself against enemy viruses.

Press Ctrl–Del to bring up the cheat dialogue box, then type one of the following:
TSVSHAH: All weapons
TSJME: Full health
TSMOUSE: Go to the next level
TSMCG: Get all keys
TSTRESOR: Open doors locked by a switch or tripwire



Whiplash

There's no time for honor in the blistering race to the finish. To speed through Tsunami Twister, Devil's Hairpin, and Death Drop, type the following cheats during game play.

SUPERMAN: Makes your car invulnerable
CUPWON: See the end of the championship sequence
CINEMA: Play in widescreen format
FORMULA1: Access alternate set of cars
MREPRISE: Access bonus cup (third set of tracks)
MRFROSTY: Icy roads
WARGATE: Cars warp

Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Send your questions to *PC Games*, Attn: Strategy & Tactics, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; e-mail: ccohen@iftw.com.

Compiled by Corey Cohen

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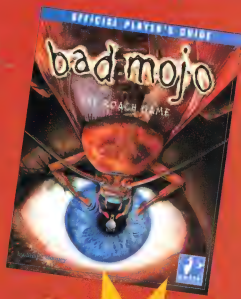

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By Christine Grech

Plug & Play: Sound and Fury

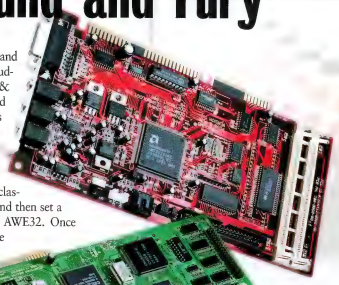
When Windows 95 made its debut splash last August, we heard a lot of promises about how the new operating system would make computing easier. One big advantage of this PC salvation was supposed to be Plug & Play (PnP), a common hardware specification designed to end the days of IRQ-fiddling, hair-pulling, and cursing when upgrading PC hardware.

For gamers, some of the worst hardware headaches involve sound cards. Unlike a troublesome CD-ROM drive installation or an internal modem upgrade, sound cards are temperamental. Just getting a new one to work doesn't guarantee a thing; you've got to keep mucking with settings for each new game you want to play.

The latest generation of PnP sound cards is supposed to change all that. The idea is that you can pop one of these babies into an empty expansion slot, turn on your PC, and have Win 95 correctly identify it and walk you painlessly through the setup process. If, by chance, the software identifies a problem, Win 95's Conflict Troubleshooter is supposed to help you identify and fix it. Piece of cake.

That's the theory. In reality, things don't always run so smoothly.

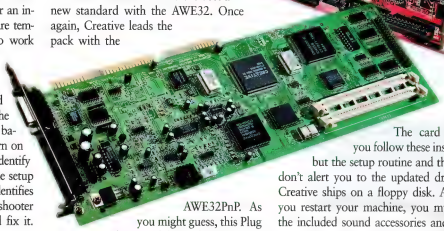
PC Games checked out four new Plug & Play cards of special interest to gamers: Creative Labs' AWE32PnP and Blaster 32PnP, Turtle Beach's TBS-2000, and Advanced Gravis' UltraSound Plug & Play Pro. We tested the cards on a Dell Dimension XPS 466V with Altec Lansing's ACS-3 speakers and ran a variety of DOS and Windows 95 games, including Havoc, TriTryst, Ice & Fire, Rebel Assault II, and Fantasy General. Here's what we found:



PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

AWE32PnP

Creative Labs set the sound standard with its classic Sound Blaster card and then set a new standard with the AWE32. Once again, Creative leads the pack with the AWE32PnP. As you might guess, this Plug & Play model is the same as the original AWE32 (which the company is phasing out), with the addition of PnP capabilities.



True to its name, the AWE32PnP was indeed Plug & Play, but the 20-minute process still wasn't as easy as it could have been. Once you fire up Win 95 and the software detects the card, it tells you to insert the Win 95 CD so that Win 95 can install the proper drivers. The card works if you follow these instructions, but the setup routine and the manual don't alert you to the updated drivers that Creative ships on a floppy disk. Also, once you restart your machine, you must install the included sound accessories and applications yourself, either from the included floppies or CD.

When it comes to sound quality, though, the AWE32PnP doesn't disappoint. In both DOS and Windows 95 games, you get clear wavetable sound, as well as simulated three-dimensional sound, thanks to E-mu's 3D Positional Audio. Creative sweetens the deal with a microphone, MIDI cable, and software accessories such as a text-to-speech program, voice-recognition software, an audio deck, a .WAV file editor, and a MIDI editor. On the hardware side, you get an onboard IDE interface for a CD-ROM drive, a joystick port, and upgrade options for the Wave Blaster II daughter card and 28.8Kbps DSVD Modem Blaster.

If you want the best and you can afford the $250, this is the one to get.

Set List

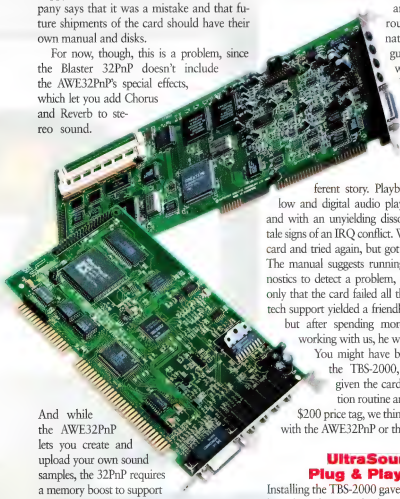
Product	Details	Pro	Con	Rating
AWE32PnP	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $249.99	Good sound; special effects; industry standard	Expensive	A
Blaster 32PnP	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $169.99	Competitive price; good sound quality	No special effects	A-
TBS-2000	Turtle Beach; 800-884-0190; $199	Best manual and clearest instructions	Buggy installation	C-
UltraSound Plug & Play Pro	Advanced Gravis; 800-257-0061; $200	None	Skimpy docs; poor DOS support	D

Blaster 32PnP

If cost is an issue, Creative's Blaster 32PnP makes a good second-place choice. Like its pricier sibling, it delivers the same easy, though not flawless, installation routine and

many of the same bundled software utilities. In fact, Creative even confuses things a bit by packaging the same User's Guide and set of floppy disks for both sound cards. The company says that it was a mistake and that future shipments of the card should have their own manual and disks.

For now, though, this is a problem, since the Blaster 32PnP doesn't include the AWE32PnP's special effects, which let you add Chorus and Reverb to stereo sound.



And while the AWE32PnP lets you create and upload your own sound samples, the 32PnP requires a memory boost to support this feature. The Sound Blaster 32PnP also lacks the upgrade option for the Wave Blaster II, but it does give you the joystick port, IDE interface, and upgrade option for the Modem Blaster.

Despite the confusion, many gamers will willingly go without these extras to pocket the approximately $80 in savings. Either way, the sound quality is top-notch.

TBS-2000

Our third choice is Turtle Beach's TBS-2000, mostly because Plug & Play let us down. We first encountered problems when Windows 95 prompted us to insert the Win 95 CD to find drivers. Instead, we used Turtle Beach's floppy disk with updated drivers. The installation routine couldn't detect them, so we had to manually browse the diskette to point Windows 95 to some 20 individual files.

After this tedious process, Win 95 reported that our installation of the TBS-2000 was successful. When the system restarted, we were prompted for the rest of the TBS-2000's floppy disks to install the included sound utilities—diagnostics software, an audio deck, and mixer. To its credit, Turtle Beach has the best manual and installation routine. Unfortunately, that didn't guarantee the card would work.

While Win 95's Device Manager showed that the TBS-2000 was working properly, our ears told a different story. Playback volume was low and digital audio played back clipped and with an unyielding dissonant blare—telltale signs of an IRQ conflict. We uninstalled the card and tried again, but got the same results. The manual suggests running the DOS diagnostics to detect a problem, but these told us only that the card failed all the tests. A call to tech support yielded a friendly, helpful person, but after spending more than an hour working with us, he was stymied, too.

You might have better results with the TBS-2000, of course. But given the card's buggy installation routine and relatively steep $200 price tag, we think you'd do better with the AWE32PnP or the Blaster 32PnP.

UltraSound Plug & Play Pro

Installing the TBS-2000 gave us some trouble, but the UltraSound Plug & Play actually wreaked havoc on our system. We spent several hours undoing the damage its Interwave sound driver did each time we attempted to install the card.

We started out with high hopes, as installation went smoothly and the included Quick Start guide even anticipated an error we encountered. But when we began testing the card with Win 95 games, we noticed poor sound quality. A look at the Device Manager showed us that the UltraSound emulation wasn't working and we were in AdLib mode.

On the DOS front, Gravis makes you go through a separate installation routine from the DOS prompt to install the required utilities. You must run these each time you want to play a new game in DOS mode so the card will correctly emulate Sound Blaster or another card. And speaking of emulation, if you opt for the standard UltraSound Plug & Play (not the Pro version that we tested), the card won't even support UltraSound in your DOS games. For that, you need a memory upgrade, which is built into the Pro version.

Running the DOS utilities crashed our computer, so we uninstalled the card and tried again. This time, when Windows restarted, the Windows Explorer was gone and it took plenty of fiddling to launch Windows Task Manager and get the Control Panel running. After a lot of hardware sleuthing we found that the UltraSound hadn't completely uninstalled itself and two copies of the Interwave driver were causing system problems. To get everything running again, we had to delete both drivers by hand and then remove references to the UltraSound from our SYSTEM.INI.

On our third try, even starting with a clean slate, the Interwave driver again caused the Windows Explorer to disappear. At this point, we fixed the system again and removed the UltraSound card for good.

Unfortunately, it seems our problems are not unique. Visitors to Gravis' CompuServe forum have also lamented difficulties with the card. The company doesn't respond on the forum and calls to tech support are repeatedly met with a busy signal.

Even if you can successfully install the UltraSound Pro on your system, you'll still have to cope with unintegrated DOS support. Why bother? ■

Sound PnP Advice

1. Before you do anything, check the README file included on the board's drivers disk.
2. Make sure you remove the drivers from your old sound card before installing the new one. To do this, go into Win 95's Device Manager and select the sound, video, and game controllers categories. Double-click each driver listed (generally three or four) to bring up its Properties and select the Driver tab to view the drivers it uses. Write down the names of these. Then select Cancel to return to the main screen and select Remove.
3. Before installing the PnP card, restart your system and verify that the drivers belonging to your previous card have been removed by Device Manager. To do this, check the WINDOWS\SYSTEM subdirectory for the files you wrote down in Step 2. If you still see them listed, delete them so they don't conflict with your new sound card's drivers.
4. If you're having problems, before calling tech support, check out the company's Web site for help: http://www.creat.com, http://www.gravis.com, http://www.tbeach.com.

Remember, every PC configuration is different, so even with Win 95's Plug & Play standards, you may get different results than ours. All we can say is, Good luck!

By J. Daniel Jones

DVD: The Next CD-ROM

You're slamming the keys so quick that you're in sync with the surround-sound machine-gun fire. This is one hot game: full-motion, high-res video, incredible audio, and best of all, speed, baby, *speed*!

You're just come to the minefield when, suddenly, you draw a blank. You remember it was a totally slick trick that the movie guy pulled, but your brain's on overload! How'd he get through the mines? After you've been blown to bits for the umpteenth time, you know you're going to have to check the flick to find the trick. So you eject the DVD disc—which looks just like a regular CD—from your computer and walk over to your wide-screen TV.

Now, you could have just as easily played the movie on the computer screen, but why? Your set-top DVD player delivers better-than-VHS-quality big-screen viewing and digital surround sound. You do a high-speed scan to the pertinent scene, drop it into slow-mo and find the smooth move you needed. Minutes later you're back at the keyboard, through the mine-field, and flirting with the frauleins.

Sound futuristic? Well, it is—but we're talking months, not decades. And while copyright concerns may prevent a dual movie/game disc from ever being made, the technology to do it is coming fast. It's the next step in digital data delivery, the Digital Versatile Disc (aka DVD), and *PC Games* is here to tell you what DVD will mean to the future of video entertainment and, more importantly, PC gaming.

One Format, Many Versions

DVD is a rarity in the introduction of new technology: From the get-go, it will be an approved and supported standard for games, movies, music, and anything else stored in digital format. Of course, it didn't start out that way. Independent development to expand current CD capacity began as far back as 1992. By 1995, two opposing technology camps had emerged, each dedicated to expanding compact discs in its own unique—and incompatible—way.

One was a consortium of several major electronics manufacturers and Hollywood studios, headed by Toshiba and Time-Warner. An entirely different format was being brandished by a Philips/Sony alliance. Each team was desperately trying to convince other companies, particularly computer hardware makers, that its product was the perfect CD successor.

As of May 1995, neither group had gotten endorsements from the major players in the computer industry—Apple, Microsoft, Compaq, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, etc. These heavy hitters simply refused to endorse either of the two formats. Instead, they urged the two sides to come together and decide on a single format. Finally, in September 1995, the competing groups saw the light—and DVD was born.

DVD started out as an acronym for Digital Video Disc, and that's essentially what the first incarnations will be. But proponents quickly realized the vast potential of a storage medium that can hold more than 17GB of digital data per CD-sized disc, and changed the moniker to Digital Versatile Disc. And versatile it is.

There are, in fact, various specifications within the DVD family, each targeted for different uses. For example, the amount of data each DVD disc will hold ranges from 4.7GB on a single-sided, single-layer disc to nearly 18GB for the high-capacity, dual-layer, double-sided discs. That translates into a stack of floppies approximately 134 feet tall. For an idea of what it means in MPEG-2 video storage, keep reading.

Movies First, Games Second

You'll be able to experience the movie side of DVD technology sometime this fall. The first DVD players will be VCR-sized set-top players designed expressly to play pre-recorded videos. Using MPEG-2 digital encoding, a typical feature film (135 minutes or less) will easily fit on a single-sided, single-layer DVD with room to spare. Longer features will use the dual-layer version holding 8.54GB.

The first DVD movie releases will likely replicate the VHS viewing experience, albeit with a much better picture. You'll pop in the disc, push Play, and plop on the couch. But it won't be long before DVDs go way beyond video cassettes. That's because DVD can support such features as multiple language tracks, content rating options (do you want to watch the R or the PG version?), multiple screen-aspect ratios, and maybe even multiple endings—all from the same disc.

DVD players for your TV set—from the likes of Sony, Toshiba, Thompson, and Panasonic—are scheduled to arrive in stores well in advance of this year's holiday shopping frenzy. They'll cost around $500 to $700. But an affordable player is less than useless if the software is too expensive. So will the prices of DVD movies dramatically

exceed the price of VHS versions?

A source at Warner Home Video replies: "Not from us! We plan to release our DVD products at 'sell-through' pricing similar to that of VHS copies." These currently run about $19 to $24 each, depending upon the title.

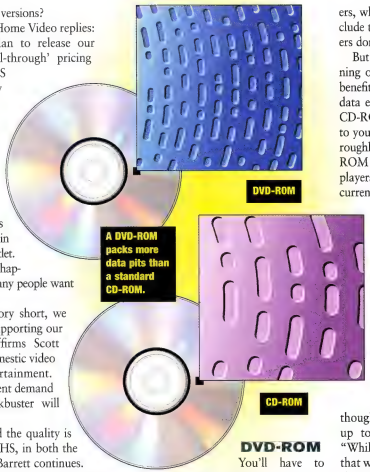
As the installed base grows (initial estimates predict sales of some 7.5 million DVD players in the first three years), DVD movies should eventually appear in your favorite rental outlet. Just how quickly that happens depends on how many people want them, and how soon.

"To make a long story short, we are in the business of supporting our customers' needs," affirms Scott Barrett, president of domestic video at Blockbuster Entertainment. "When there is a sufficient demand for the product, Blockbuster will support it."

"I've seen DVD, and the quality is certainly higher than VHS, in both the video and the audio," Barrett continues. "And I have no doubt there are a lot of other advantages to DVD, such as having multiple soundtracks. The questions remains, How much does the consumer values these features? There's also the issue of recordability. I personally believe that the early adopters will be those in the upper-income, home-theater category…at least until the player price drops to around $300. But when the demand is there, Blockbuster will certainly carry the product."

One major advantage of DVD technology is that barring mishandling, the discs won't suffer from the inevitable wear and tear that degrades VHS tapes. There's no reason for a movie not to look as good the thousandth time it's played as it did the first. And looking good is both a major goal and a requirement for the platform's success.

The MPEG-2 technology that DVD is based on is supposed to produce images that approach so-called D-1 quality, currently the best obtainable in NTSC, the American television format. That should be good enough to make even the slickest VHS-based video look positively shabby by comparison. And it had better be good, if the new format is to make any inroads into the entrenched VHS market.



DVD-ROM

You'll have to wait until the end of the year or even 1997 before you can buy a DVD-ROM player for your PC—and even longer before you have a choice of DVD games.

"As with all new media, we'll make sure we take advantage of it once it becomes installed in our customers' homes," says Steve Weinstein, vice president of research and development for Spectrum HoloByte.

High prices could well be a holdup. Manufacturers are still debating the price of DVD drives for computers.

One factor that may vary the price of the DVD-ROM drives is whether the drives themselves will carry MPEG-2 hardware decoders. Some computers already have these decoders built in or on add-in cards, but many PCs lack them, and have to rely on more inefficient MPEG software if they've got enough horsepower. Because many drive manufacturers have yet to determine whether to uniformly include hardware decoders or make multiple drive versions (with and without decoders), pricing is still up in the air. (Toshiba, however, says its DVD-ROM drives, scheduled for an October release, will cost around $500. That's less than the company's set-top players, which are more costly because they include the MPEG decoders and the PC players don't.)

But if DVD will have a tough time winning over movie fans, gamers will see the benefits right off the bat. DVD packs the data equivalent of more than 26 standard CD-ROMs on a single disc, and delivers it to your PC at 1,108 kilobytes per second—roughly twice as fast as a quad-speed CD-ROM player. To top it off, DVD-ROM players will be completely compatible with current CD and CD-ROM technology, so you'll be able to play all of your old games on your new drive.

So what exactly will DVD mean for games? "The main advantage that I see is that it will enable us to put significantly larger amounts of audio and video, at significantly higher quality, on a single disc," says Spectrum's Weinstein. "And no longer will [compression technology] be a deterrent to having top-quality video on our customers' desktop."

Despite these selling points, though, not all game publishers are lining up to jump on the DVD bandwagon. "While DVD sounds like a technology that will have a substantial impact on both the computer biz and a whole range of video services, we expect that the installed base of users will remain pretty small for at least a few years," says Doug Zartman, director of public relations at Bungie Software, publisher of the top-selling Marathon games.

More importantly, DVD's main advantages—incredible amounts of storage and high-quality video—are significant only if a game requires them. The format will be a godsend to multidisc titles like The 11th Hour and Phantasmagoria, whose full-motion video requires tons of memory, but shooters such as Quake and Duke Nukem 3D don't even come close to filling a standard CD-ROM. "We have yet to put any video material into our games," says Zartman. "We certainly may do that sometime in the future, but the projects we have planned right now, while ambitious and cutting-edge, will not require gigabytes of space."

There is one sure bet about the new technology. If DVD-ROM does establish itself as the CD format of choice, it won't be long before game developers begin to whine: "Gee, only 18GB. If I just had a little bit more space, I could make a really great game!" ■

Hardware Spotlight

VIRTUAL-REALITY HEADACHES

VFX1 Headgear

When Forte's **VFX1 Headgear Virtual Reality System** finally arrived, I ripped open the box like a child tearing into a pile of presents on Christmas morning. I was bubbling with anticipation for the ultimate PC toy.

Unfortunately, an hour later, my mood was more like a kid whose presents turned out to be socks and underwear. The VFX1 was incredibly difficult to configure for the games it supports, and once it was set up, it wasn't that impressive.

The VFX1 headset contains a binary optical system designed to work with standard VGA games. Once it is properly set up, the headset lets you look anywhere you want in a game—left, right, up, down—simply by moving your head.

The unit is also fitted with stereo headphones, and Forte even throws in its new CyberPuck controller (see review in *PC Entertainment*, May 1996, page 93). The CyberPuck, which resembles a hockey puck, lets you control game movement by tilting it forward to walk forward, backward to walk backward, and side to side to turn. It's supposed to work with the optics to make you feel as if you're actually inside a game's environment.

Setting up and calibrating the VFX1 requires you to install an interface card (in an available 16-bit expansion slot) and some included software. That part was a snap, taking roughly 15 minutes. Getting the unit to work with a game, however, was another story.

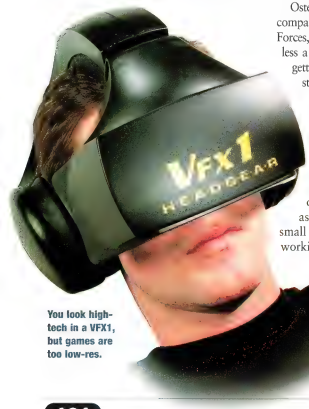
Ostensibly, some 50 games are VFX1-compatible, including such hits as Dark Forces, Magic Carpet, and Descent. But unless a game includes native driver support, getting it to work can be a bear. Better instructions and documentation would have been helpful.

Even when I finally got the VFX1 to work with games like Heretic and Magic Carpet, I was disappointed. The 739-by-230 resolution is too low, making it hard to see exactly what's going on—particularly in flight sims such as EF2000, where you have to read small numbers and gauges. (Forte is working on a new system that supports Super VGA.)

With all the hassles, the VFX1 simply isn't worth the almost-$900 price. (Forte Technologies; 716-427-8595; $895)

—Steve Klett

Rating: C-



You look high-tech in a VFX1, but games are too low-res.

Muddy bass makes the MLi-370 fine for games but not for music.

GAME HEADPHONES

Sony MDR-005EG

Slapping the word "games" on a product's marketing flier doesn't necessarily make it the perfect game peripheral.

Take Sony Electronic's new **MDR-005EG** headphones, for example. Sony claims the lightweight gray phones were specifically designed for computer and video games. The company bolsters its claim by pointing to the Mega Bass enhancement technology and 9.9-foot cord. But let's face it: Mega Bass turns up in lots of Sony headphones, so the only real difference here is the long cord, which saves you from having to buy an extension at the local Radio Shack.

Other than that, the MDR-005EG phones are practically indistinguishable from dozens of other models. They sound fine: a little muddy in the bottom end, a little thin in the mid-range—nothing that would bother you when you're busy on the trail of the Ripper. At least they're comfortable, and they don't cost that much.

Just keep in mind that you're not really getting anything special with these. Now, if Sony *really* wanted to build headphones for PC games, it'd put a volume control on them somewhere. (Sony Electronics; 800-222-7669; $12.99)

—Fredric Paul

Rating: C+

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MCNEELY & CLARK

WANTED: MORE BOOM, LESS THUD

MLi-370 Speakers

If you want those Duke Nukem pipebombs to clink, Doom II explosions to roar, and Air Warrior engines to scream in mid-dive, MIDI Land's **MLi-370** three-way speakers may be a pretty good bet. But if you're listening to White Zombie and your favorite instrument is the bass, you may want to do a little more speaker-hunting.

For just under $300, a pair of MLi-370s definitely cranks. The speakers output 55 watts with clarity and crispness in the midrange and treble; you'll likely hit your top volume long before hearing them distort. A bit flat in the two-dimensional setting, they spring to life when you depress the 3-D DSP switch—you'll never turn it off. The 5-inch-by-7-inch footprint is a bit bulky for computer speakers, but they'll make your games sound good enough to justify making room on your desktop.

If you're looking for computer speakers that deliver a finer music-listening experience, however, muddy, undefined bass response keeps the MLi-370s from coming through. You can correct that with a subwoofer for an extra $239, but now you're talking more than $500! You can do a lot better for a lot less. (MIDI Land; 909-592-1168; $295) —*Donald St. John*

Rating: B-

FOR HARD-CORE SIM PILOTS ONLY

Pro Throttle

When it comes to buttons and switches on flight-sim controllers, more is definitely better. So hard-core, over-the-top flight-sim pilots who aren't satisfied with CH Products' CH Throttle may want to check out the new high-end version called—appropriately enough—the **Pro Throttle**.

Pro Throttle delivers 20 programmable functions.

The new stick looks and feels the same as the CH Throttle, but offers four buttons and four four-way hat switches. In short, it puts 20 programmable functions in the palm of your hand. (The original CH Throttle has six buttons, one two-way hat switch, and one four-way hat switch.)

Sound like complicated overkill? Don't worry—the Pro Throttle is as easy to program for your favorite game as its less-sophisticated sibling. The graphical, mouse-driven software that comes with the Pro makes configuring it as simple as pushing the button you want to program and clicking on its corresponding keyboard function. CH Products also supplies premade programs for many popular games, including U.S. Navy Fighters, EF2000, Apache, and Falcon 3.0. Better still, using the Pro Throttle also lets you program otherwise nonprogrammable CH Products joysticks.

Of course, the Pro Throttle lists at almost $200. But if you look around, you'll probably be able to find it for less. Mail-order firm Computer Express, for example, has it for an amazing $119. (CH Products; 619-598-2518; $189)

—*Steve Klett*

Rating: A-

Gaming Hardware Hall of Fame

Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy. Just check PC Games' running list of our top hardware recommendations. Each month, we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

Category	Product	Details	Our Rating
PC	Packard Bell Platinum Pro 166	Packard Bell; 800-733-5858; $3,299	A-
Monitor	Nokia Valugraph 447L	Nokia; 800-296-6542; $699	B+
CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	B+
Sound card	AWE32	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $24.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; $219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; $69.95	A+
Gamepad	GrIP system	Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558; $99.95	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; $219 internal, $299 external	A
Graphics card	Diamond Stealth 64	Diamond Multimedia; 800-468-5846; $229	A-
Key add-on	MultiSpin 4x4	NEC; 800-632-4636; $279	B

TECH SHOP

By Patrick Marshall

S.O.S.

Speeding up a Pentium, Win 95 on old sound cards, and TVs vs. computer monitors.

Shifting into OverDrive

I own a Pentium 60 that's Pentium OverDrive–upgradable. The problem is, no one that I've seen makes OverDrive chips for Pentiums yet. If I want to upgrade, can I just buy a faster Pentium chip and change the required jumper setting on my motherboard and expect it to work?

Michael Zetzsche
mzetch@earthlink.net

Unfortunately, because the Pentium 60 is a 5-volt processor and the faster Pentium chips (75MHz and up) run on 3.3 volts, you can't just swap in a faster chip. But don't despair: Pentium OverDrive chips designed to run in your machine are now becoming available.

Specifically, you can upgrade your Pentium 60 processor to a respectable 120MHz. Similarly, 66MHz Pentiums can become 133MHz processors and 75MHz systems can be boosted to 125MHz. By next May, owners of 100MHz Pentiums will be able to buy a 166MHz OverDrive chip. Eventually, Intel plans to provide OverDrives for its 150MHz and 166MHz chips as well.

When you upgrade to a Pentium OverDrive, you're getting more than just a faster processor. Besides simply speeding up your games, the OverDrive upgrade chips include voltage filtering and an on-the-chip fan that ensures the processor doesn't get too hot. The 120/133-MHz Pentium OverDrives also have a built-in voltage regulator for upgrading the 5-volt 60- and 66-MHz Pentium processors to a 3.3-volt Pentium OverDrive processor.

The list price for the 120/133-MHz OverDrive chip is $399; you can get it directly from Intel at 800-538-3373. (For more on what it's like to install an OverDrive chip, see "Stuck in OverDrive," *PC Entertainment*, November 1995, page 54.)

No Win 95 Pro

I have a Pentium 90, 16MB of system memory, a double-speed CD-ROM drive, and a Pro Audio Spectrum 16 sound card. Before I upgraded to Windows 95, my computer could run any game that supported my sound card or a Sound Blaster card. Back then, my AUTOEXEC.BAT file included a line that read "A220 D1 I7 T3." Under Windows 95, it now reads "A388 D7 I12 T3." Because of these new settings, my older DOS games no longer give me digital sound, and I can't get my sound card to perform in any Sound Blaster–compatible modes. Have you come upon this problem with the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 sound card and Windows 95?

Anthony W. Drake, Sr.
Brooklyn, NY

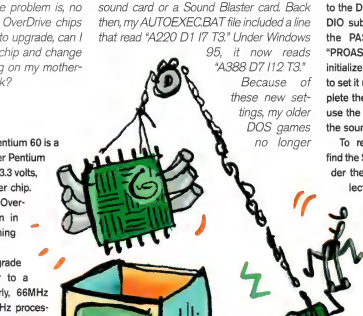


ILLUSTRATION BY MARCOS SORENSON

Ah, how quickly computer equipment becomes dated.

The Pro Audio Spectrum 16 (PAS-16) sound card, made by Media Vision, was produced and sold before the era of Windows 95. Because of its vintage, it doesn't integrate smoothly with the new Windows operating system, as you and quite a few others can testify. Unfortunately, Media Vision no longer sells sound cards in the retail market, and is offering only limited Win 95 tech support.

That doesn't mean your situation is hopeless. Here are a couple of things to try. First, go to the DOS prompt and change to the PROAUDIO subdirectory, or whatever directory holds the PAS-16 utilities. Enter the command "PROAS d:3 q:10 s:1,220,1,7 m:0 j:1." This will initialize the sound card, and should allow you to set it up properly under Windows 95. To complete the process, go back to Windows 95 and use the Install New Hardware wizard to set up the sound card.

To re-establish Sound Blaster emulation, find the Sound Card Properties dialogue box under the Device Manager and change the selected configuration to "Basic Configuration 1." Next, go to the Control Panel and select the Multimedia utility. Choose the Advanced Tab, then Audio Devices, and call up the Properties dialogue box. Finally, disable the audio functions.

These fixes take care of the problems most frequently encountered by Pro Audio Spectrum owners. If they don't help you, you'll want to download a file of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on using the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 with Windows 95. You can get WIN95FAQ.EXE from Media Visions' bulletin board (510-770-0527), Web site (http://www.mediavis.com), or CompuServe forum (GO MEDIA VISION).

TV vs. Monitor

I know you need special equipment to play computer games on a television set or watch TV broadcasts on a computer. How come? And just what is the difference between a TV set and a computer monitor?

Bruce Smith
Chicago, IL

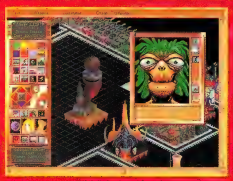
A good computer display is to a standard television what a new Mercedes is to an old Volkswagen bug: They both do the same job, but one does it much better than the other. Computer displays and televisions are almost identical in function and general design, but both the computer monitor and the Mercedes are higher-performance models.

continued on page 108

How Do You Imagine HELL?

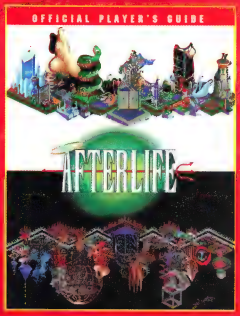
Earn Pennies From Heaven, party in the Disco Inferno, collect your Eternal Reward — anything is possible in this exciting new sim from LucasArts. As Demiurge, your goal is to set up and manage a successful and profitable afterlife. And if you think it sounds easy, just think who you'll be reporting to...

With more than 250 pages of hints, cheats, and strategies in the *Afterlife Official Player's Guide* you'll learn the heavenly secrets and devilish tricks necessary to master this unique and engaging sim.



Inside you'll find:

- Exclusive hints, strategies, and cheats to master the game
- Thorough description of simulation strategies
- Complete inventory of buildings
- A look at the LucasArts techno-magicians behind the game



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TECH SHOP *continued from page 106*

The underlying technology behind computer monitors and televisions is the same: Three electron guns in the back of a unit's cathode ray tube (CRT) fire streams of electrons into the back of the display panel, which sets off the red, green, and blue phosphors in the panel.

Most monitors' electron guns scan the display from top to bottom in a series of horizontal lines, painting the entire screen 30 times a second. In the case of a standard television, however, only every other line of the screen is "painted" in each pass. That's called an "interlaced" display. Your eye doesn't notice because you generally sit a ways back from the TV screen and the video images are constantly in motion. With computer displays, however, you sit very close and often look at static images. Under such circumstances, interlaced displays result in an annoying flicker. That's why computer displays have "vertical scanning frequencies" that are more than twice as high as those of standard televisions. Thirty times a second, the electron guns in your color computer monitor repaint each and every line in the display.

Super VGA computer monitors are also capable of higher resolutions than most televisions. While a standard television displays 525 lines of data no matter how large its screen is, most Super VGA monitors can display 768 lines or higher. (When you see specifications on monitors and video cards telling you what resolutions the equipment supports, those specifications indicate the numbers of vertical and horizontal lines that can be displayed. Thus, a video card that can display a resolution of 1024-by-768 can show 1024 vertical lines and 768 horizontal lines of pixels on your computer monitor.)

Software can handle the differences in resolution, but televisions and computer monitors display data at different frequencies. That's why you have to install special cards and boxes to display your computer games on a TV and to watch TV on your PC. (For details on how to hook up your computer to your TV set, see "Plain TV? Play TV!" *Electronic Entertainment*, September 1995, page 80.) ■

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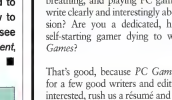

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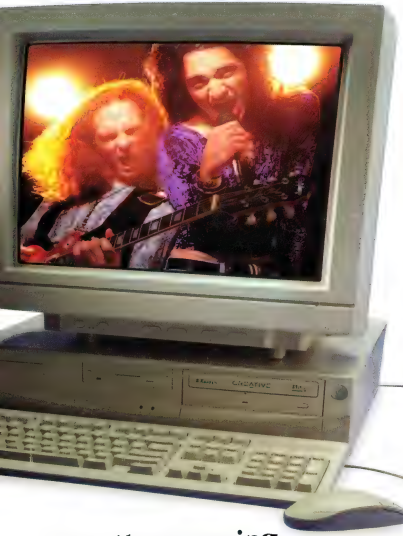

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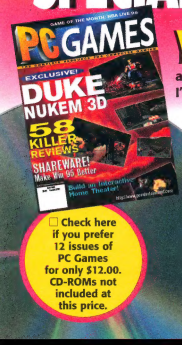

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